

but was conducted mostly against isolated ARVN elements. To improve security, the 9th Regiment upgraded patrol activities to company size; our forces also inflicted heavier losses on the enemy. As of 20 June, however, the 9th Regiment and the 1st Armored Cavalry Squadron began to reduce their area of operation and fell back to near the border in the vicinity of Route No. 13. This action paralleled the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Cambodia which was also initiated on that day. Along their withdrawal route, ARVN forces made several contacts with the enemy and also discovered additional enemy supply caches. By the evening of 27 June, our forces were already in night-defense positions on the RVN side of the border. The 9th Regiment continued operating in this border area until 30 June when it was returned to its rear base at Chon Thanh.

The following is a recapitulation of the results obtained during the operations conducted by United States and RVN forces against the Fishhook and Base Areas 350, 351, 352, 353, 354 and 707:

- TOAN THANG 42: 3,588 enemy killed or captured. 1,891 individual weapons, 478 crew-served weapons, 380.6 tons of ammunition, 1,041.6 tons of rice seized.
- TOAN THANG 43: 3,190 enemy killed or captured. 4,693 individual weapons, 731 crew-served weapons, 338.4 tons of ammunition, 2,698 tons of rice seized.
- TOAN THANG 44: 302 enemy killed or captured. 297 individual and 34 crew-served weapons, 4 tons of ammunition and 217 tons of rice seized.
- TOAN THANG 45: 1,527 enemy killed or captured. 3,073 individual and 449 crew-served weapons, 791 tons of ammunition, and 1,583 tons of rice seized.
- TOAN THANG 46: 79 enemy killed or captured. 325 individual and 41 crew-served weapons, 19.7 tons of ammunition and 79 tons of rice seized.

See Appendix A for a listing of all enemy losses during the Cambodian Incursion.

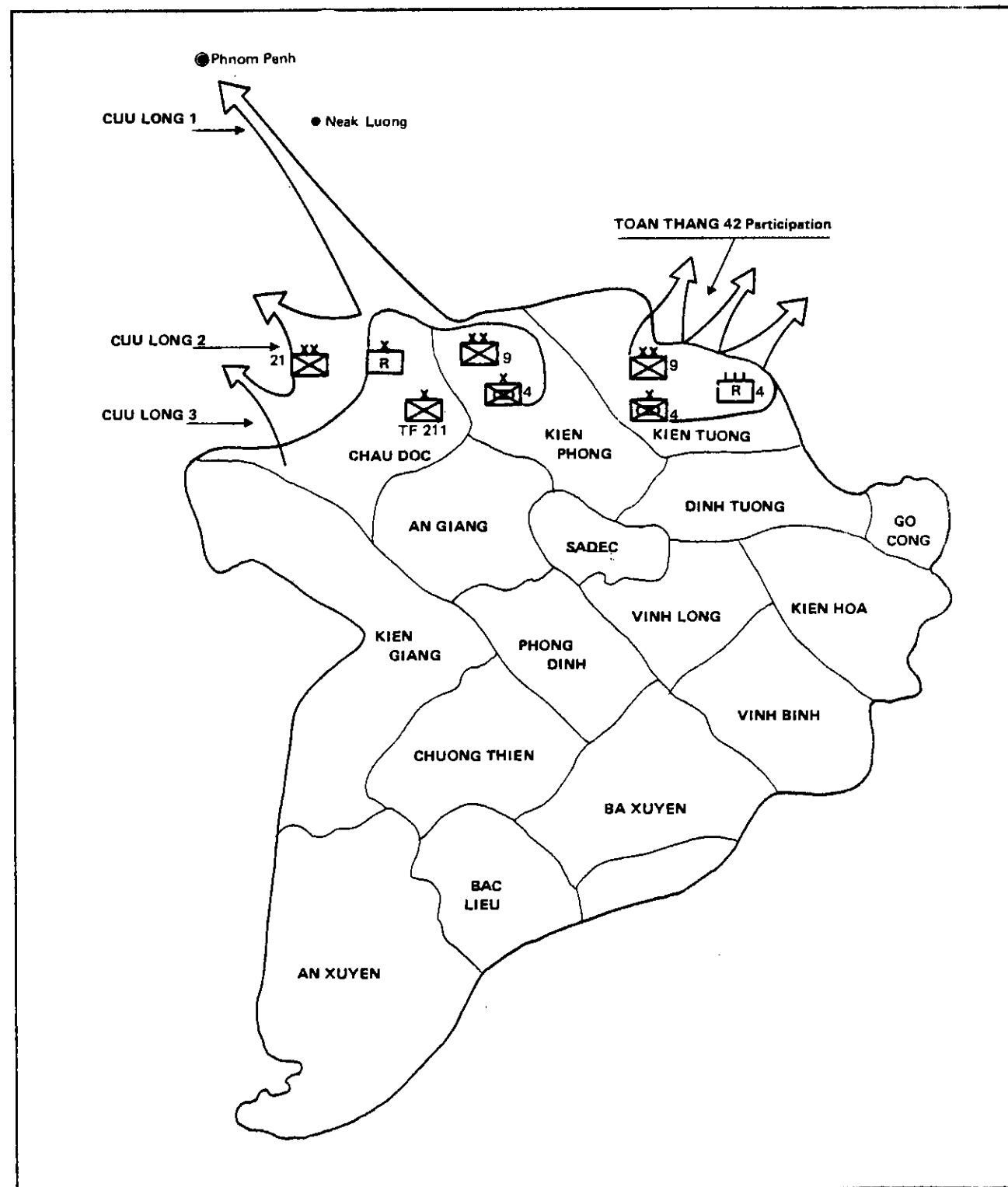
The quantities of weapons, ammunition and rice seized in these areas indicated that they were important enemy rear service bases. Most captured crates bore the markings of Communist bloc countries; these items were new and still wrapped in original packings. In particular, weapon and ammunition caches were found in deep underground shelters, well camouflaged and located in dense jungles. All accesses to these supply caches were mined and rigged with booby traps. Most of our casualties were caused by these mines and booby traps.

Clearing the Mekong and Repatriating Vietnamese

The IV Corps Commander was given the mission to clear the Mekong as far as Phnom Penh, and to repatriate the Vietnamese who were in refugee camps in the Cambodian capital. This operation was designated CUU LONG I. (Map 18)

After their unsuccessful efforts to lay siege to and harass Cambodian cities and outposts east of the Mekong River, NVA forces evaded U.S. and RVN forces operating in this area and shifted their pressure to the west. They began to interdict and attack all vital roads and waterways connecting Phnom Penh with provincial cities to the south and west of the capital. Routes No. 2 and 3, which led toward Phnom Penh from the south, were frequently interdicted by Khmer Communist elements. The enemy's interdiction and disruptive efforts were even more extensive on the Mekong River. Traffic moving on the river was constantly attacked and the ferry boats at Neak Luong, which provided a key east-west traffic junction on Route No. 1, had been towed away by the enemy. Both Route No. 1 and the Mekong River toward Phnom Penh were therefore cut off, which effectively isolated this capital city from its normal sources of supply. In Phnom Penh, food and fuel, especially gasoline for automobiles and industrial plants, were beginning to get scarce. Food reserves in the city were just enough for two or three weeks of supply. Meanwhile, refugees kept pouring into the city in

Map 18 - General Locations for CUU LONG 1, 2, 3, and IV Corps
Participation in TOAN THANG 42



increasing numbers as the fighting expanded, and the enemy tightened his pressure on the city and its surroundings.

In response to an appeal by the Khmer government which specifically asked for the clearing of the Mekong River and axes of communication to the south by the RVNAF, IV Corps launched Operation CUU LONG I. In addition to its primary objective of clearing the Mekong River, this operation was also intended to repatriate Vietnamese residents in Phnom Penh. The GVN was aware that from 60,000 to 75,000 Vietnamese were being confined to camps and they wished to return to South Vietnam. In late April 1970, a GVN delegation led by Dr. Ngon Nguon Phieu had gone to Phnom Penh to make arrangements with the Cambodian Government for the repatriation of Vietnamese residents.

CUU LONG I began 9 May 1970 when IV Corps forces, which consisted of the 9th Infantry Division, the 21st Infantry Division (-) and five armored cavalry squadrons, reinforced by Amphibious Task Force 211 (composed of 1 Marine brigade and about 30 VNN ships) crossed the border and moved inside Cambodia on several axes. Two major ARVN armor-infantry columns moved up the Mekong River on both of its banks while six helicopter companies of the U.S. Cougar Task Force heli-lifted the marines and rangers to an area south of Neak Luong. On the Mekong River itself, a combined U.S. - RVN naval task force of approximately 100 assorted ships (30 U.S. naval ships among them) advanced toward Phnom Penh. This combined naval task force was placed under the overall command of Rear Admiral Tran Van Chon, Vietnam Navy Commander. He was assisted by Rear Admiral Mathew who commanded the U.S. naval component of the task force. A combined VNN-U.S. Navy staff was installed onboard a command ship, the USS Benewah, anchored at Tan Chau on the RVN side of the border.

After two days of operation, the IV Corps ground forces had reached Neak Luong, clearing both banks of the Mekong River from the border. They were joined there at 0530 hours on 11 May by the combined naval task force. All U.S. naval advisers and naval ships were to stay at Neak Luong because they were not authorized to advance beyond

30 km inside Cambodia. While on station at Neak Luong, VNN and U.S. Navy units conducted an extensive civic action program, providing medical care for both Cambodians and Vietnamese living in this area. In the meantime, IV Corps armor-infantry forces and the VNN task force (minus U.S. advisers) continued their clearing operation in the direction of Phnom Penh where they arrived at 1000 hours on 11 May. The arrival of the Vietnamese naval task force and ground troops brought welcoming cheers from the local Khmer population. This was in fact one of the greatest shows of force ever displayed by the VNN, which was intended both to impress the FANK and raise the morale of local Vietnamese residents. Rumors had been spread that many Vietnamese residents were assassinated by Khmer soldiers and it was hoped that this show of force would deter these soldiers from wrong doing. On their part, the Vietnamese residents in Phnom Penh also found their fear effectively allayed by the presence of Vietnamese naval ships.

After the arrival in Phnom Penh of the RVN naval task force, which numbered about 30 ships, the VNN received a request from the FANK General Staff to help clear the waterway route from Phnom Penh to Kompong Cham. Kompong Cham was the third most important Cambodian city and the seat of the Khmer 1st Military Region Headquarters. This city had been surrounded by NVA forces of the 9th Division and shelled for the past 10 days. Because of the NVA siege, the FANK garrison in Kompong Cham was unable to evacuate its wounded and was running short of ammunition.

Responding to the FANK General Staff's request, the VNN task force continued its clearing operation up the Mekong River and reached Kompong Cham at 0600 hours on 12 May. In this city there were about 9,000 Vietnamese residents already assembled, all requesting return to South Vietnam. They embarked on the VNN ships which moved out of Kompong Cham at 0100 hours and arrived at Phnom Penh at 1900 hours on 12 May. The naval convoy, with Vietnamese residents aboard, then continued its journey home, leaving Phnom Penh at 0400 hours on 13 May, and reached the border at 1800 hours the same day. The

initial stage. On 12 May 1970, while on a field inspection trip over the areas of Kien Tuong and Kien Phong, his helicopter collided with a gunship and crashed. His death occurred while the clearing operation on the Mekong River was still unaccomplished. He was replaced by Major General Ngo Dzu.

CUU LONG II AND III

CUU LONG II and III were conducted in support of Khmer Military Region II. (Map 18)

CUU LONG II

Takeo is an important Cambodian city located 40 km south of Phnom Penh. Beginning in early May 1970, the enemy overran outposts along Routes No. 2 and 3 and forced the evacuation of others. Concurrently, pressure was increasing on Takeo and this city found its road accesses to the south effectively interdicted. Also during this period Takeo was shelled frequently, even during daytime.

(Map 18)

After learning the assignment of Major General Ngo Dzu as IV Corps Commander in replacement of Major General Nguyen Viet Thanh, Brigadier General Fernandez, Commander Khmer Military Region II at Kompong Speu, contacted him personally and asked him to help clear NVA forces from around Takeo. Dzu was a former classmate of Fernandez; both attended the General Staff course in France during 1953. Dzu submitted it to the JGS which quickly gave its approval. As a result, on 16 May, 1970, IV Corps initiated Operation CUU LONG II while the evacuation of Vietnamese residents from Phnom Penh was still in progress as part of CUU LONG I. The objective of this second operation was to assist the Khmer Government in restoring security around Takeo and re-establishing local governments in the area extending from Kampot to the Bassac River, to include the provincial territories of Kampot,

Tuk Meas, Phum Kamphong, Takeo and Prek Thei. ARVN forces participating in the operation consisted of the 9th and 21st Infantry Divisions, the 4th Armor Brigade, the 4th Ranger Group (with 3 battalions), the Special Forces Command of MR-4 and the entire territorial force of Chau Doc Province. IV Corps established its forward command post at Chi Lang Training Center to facilitate coordination and control.

After one week of operation, IV Corps forces had completely cleared both routes No. 2 and No. 3. For the first time, VNAF helicopters were used to helilift Khmer troops in combined operations with IV Corps units south of Takeo. In total, IV Corps units made 21 contacts with the enemy, discovered 26 enemy supply caches, seized 792 individual and 84 crew-served weapons, and destroyed 43 tons of rice. Enemy losses amounted to 613 killed, 52 captured and 9 ralliers. Our forces suffered 36 killed and 112 wounded. CUU LONG II was terminated on 24 May at 1600 hours.

CUU LONG III

Concurrently as it was terminating CUU LONG II, IV Corps launched another operation, CUU LONG III, in the same general area but without the 21st Division which was redeployed to South Vietnam. The 9th Division thus extended its area of operation to include the one vacated by the 21st. All other ARVN forces remained the same. (Map 18)

From 25 May to 30 June 1970, IV Corps forces combined their activities with those of the Khmer Military Region II, reestablishing local governments in the areas of Kompong Trach, Tuk Meas, Tani, Kompong Chrey and Tunleap. During this period, the enemy deliberately avoided contact with our forces. The most remarkable exploit was achieved by the 16th Regiment, 9th Division and 12th Armored Cavalry Squadron which recovered 3,500 weapons in storage that NVA forces had not had time to seize when they launched their attack in this area.

At certain times during the cross-border operations, up to 3/4 of IV Corps forces were committed in Cambodia. The security situation in the Mekong Delta was not affected, however; it was well handled by RF and PF troops. This in itself was a remarkable achievement.

Another significant aspect of the Cambodian incursions by IV Corps forces was the participation of 30 U.S. naval ships during CUU LONG I. These U.S. ships had made a major contribution in the evacuation of 70,000 Vietnamese residents from Cambodia.

BINH TAY I, II and III

The principal forces involved in the BINH TAY series of operations were the ARVN 22d and 23d Infantry Divisions, the 2d Ranger Group, and the 2d Armor Brigade. The United States provided the 4th Infantry Division, less one brigade. (Map 19)

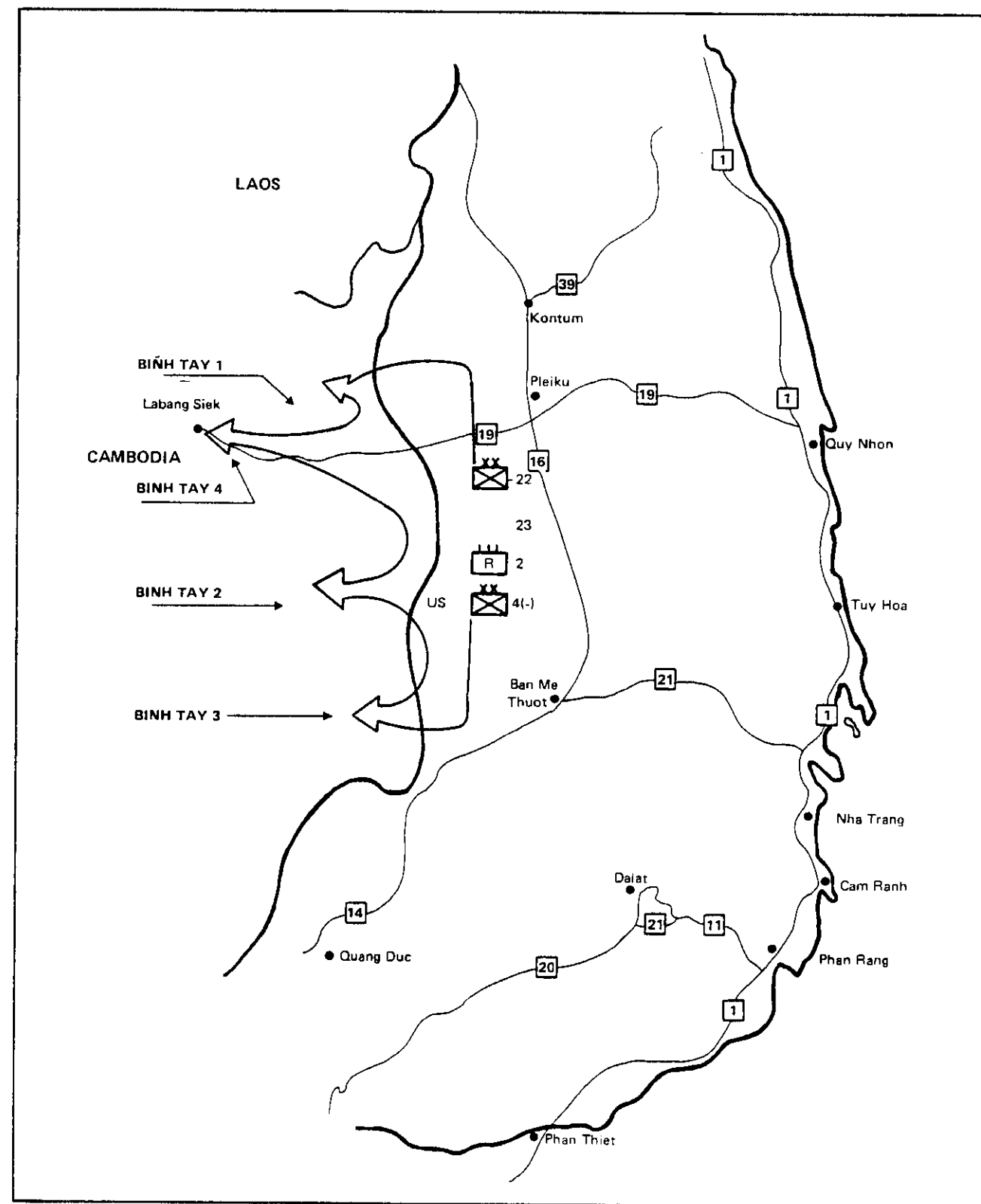
BINH TAY I

Not until two days after III Corps and the U.S. Field Force II had begun their cross-border operations into Cambodia did II Corps and the U.S. Field Force I receive orders to attack enemy base areas along the western border of MR-2. (Map 20) When these orders were received on 2 May 1970, units of the U.S. 4th Infantry Division and the ARVN 22d Infantry Division were conducting operations in enemy Base Area 226 northwest of Binh Dinh Province.

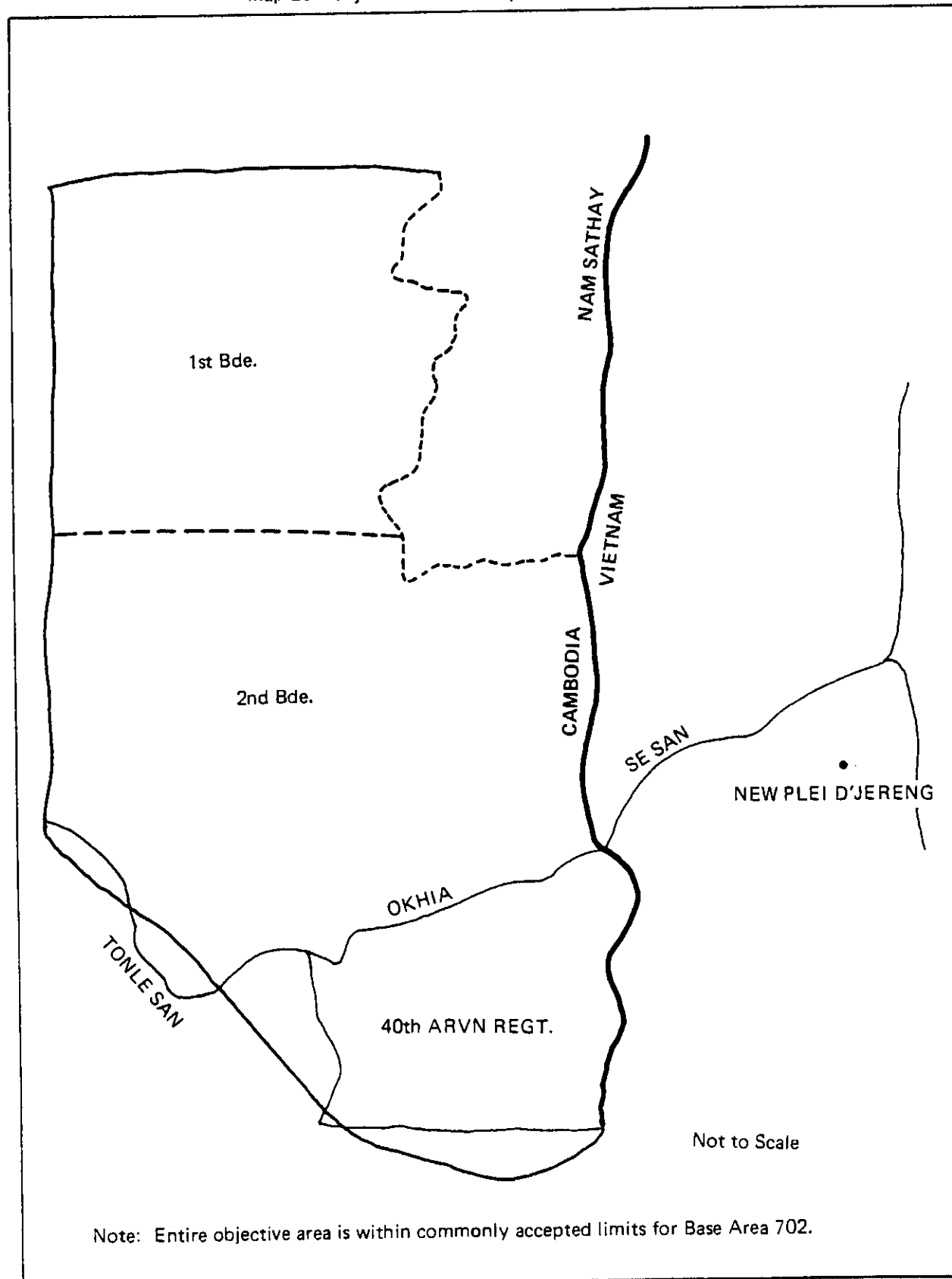
To carry out the JGS and MACV orders, II Corps and the U.S. Field Force I quickly extracted the 22d ARVN Division and U.S. 4th Division forces from their areas of operation to refit and resupply. They were moved to staging areas to prepare for cross-border activities.

While the U.S. 4th Division units were being extracted from Base Area 226, the division staff and its ARVN counterpart of the 22d Division made plans to attack and destroy enemy Base Area 702 located in Cambodia west of Pleiku. This was the first objective selected for our combined operations across the long border of Military Region 2. When plans were completed, the participating units of the U.S. 4th Division and the 40th Regiment, 22d Division, were moved on 4 May to a staging area near Special Forces Camp New Plei D' Jereng west of Pleiku. However, one element of the U.S.

Map 19 - General Locations of BINH TAY 1, 2, 3 and 4



Map 20 - Objective Area for Operation BINH TAY 1



2d Brigade did not close in its staging area south of Plei D' Jereng until the morning of 6 May.

The 1st Brigade, U.S. 4th Division, which had preceded the 2d into the staging area, began helilifting the 3/506 Infantry into the objective area on 5 May as planned. At 0915 hours, the first helicopter carrying troops of this battalion failed to land because of heavy enemy caliber.50 fire from the ground. The heliborne assault was aborted and the 3/506 Infantry returned to Plei D'Jereng. By this time, the weather had turned bad and because fuel supply points for the helicopter fleet had not been fully operational, the heliborne assault was postponed until the next day.

During the morning of 6 May, the 1st Brigade, U.S. 4th Division, resumed the insertion of its troops into the objective area as planned. Despite intensive preparatory fire by U.S. tactical air on the landing zone, enemy antiaircraft fire was still very heavy from the ground and prevented the 3/8 Infantry from landing. On orders from the battalion commander, the helicopters switched to an alternate landing zone. However, after only 60 troops had landed, one helicopter was hit and crashed in the landing zone; two others were seriously damaged when they attempted to land. U.S. tactical air and gunships made feverish effort to silence enemy antiaircraft fire and enabled medevac helicopters to extract the wounded. By late afternoon, only 60 troops of the 3/8 Infantry were in the landing zone. The 1/14 Infantry, however, had succeeded in landing 75% of its troops.

By 7 May, the entire force of the 1st Brigade, U.S. 4th Division, was inserted into the objective area, followed by its sister unit, the 2d Brigade. As the troops landed, 105 mm howitzers were also brought in to provide close fire support. Heavier artillery pieces such as 8" howitzers and 175 mm guns were only deployed on the RVN side of the border, along Routes Nos. 19W and 509, during the entire operation.

On 9 May, the 3/506 Infantry uncovered a rice depot containing about 500 tons. On 11 May, elements of the 2/14 Infantry discovered an enemy dispensary complete with surgical equipment and medicine and

the 3/8 Infantry found another 20-bed hospital. The next day, 12 May 1970, the 2d Brigade was ordered to redeploy to South Vietnam; it left the 1/12 Infantry in the area of operation which was placed under the 1st Brigade's operational control. On 13 May, two battalions of the 2d Brigade, the 1/22 and 2/35 were helilifted back to Radcliff Base at An Khe. Here, they stood down, pending redeployment to the United States. After the 2d Brigade (-) had completed its re-deployment, the 1st Brigade (+) in its turn also received orders to move out of Base Area 702. This area of operation was to be taken over by the 2d ARVN Ranger Group of II Corps. On 15 May, the 1/12 Infantry was helilifted out of the area of operation to Camp New Plei D' Jereng. From there, it moved by truck back to An Khe during the morning of 16 May. On the same day, the 3/8 and 3/506 Infantry were also extracted and returned to South Vietnam.

In the meantime, units of the 40th Regiment, 22d Division and the 2d Ranger Group, continued search operations in Base Area 702. To support ARVN activities in Cambodia, the U.S. 3/8 and 3/506 Infantry after their extraction from the area of operation, resumed their activities on the RVN side of the border and established a fire support base in the Plei Trap area.

Operation BINH TAY I was terminated on 25 May 1970. A tally of results provided the following statistics. On the friendly side, 43 were killed and 118 wounded. The enemy incurred 212 killed and 7 detained. Our forces seized 20 crew-served and 859 individual weapons. They also confiscated or destroyed 519 tons of rice and burned down 2,157 huts and other surface installations used by the enemy.

The area of operation or Base Area 702 was adjacent to the Tri-Border area, a haven for the enemy B-3 Front units since 1965. Within Base Area 702, which was located in Cambodia, there were also certain B-3 Front elements such as liaison and communication way stations and binh trams where enemy main force units usually rested and recuperated. As of the beginning of May 1970, however, no enemy main force units were reported in Base Area 702. According to intelligence reports, there were about 1,000 enemy troops in the area

of operation prior to the initiation of BINH TAY I. However, except for the antiaircraft activity during our heliborne assaults, the enemy deliberately avoided contact throughout the operation. Given the large extent of the objective area and the limited duration of the operation, our forces were unable to destroy all enemy installations and supply caches as originally intended. The absence of enemy contact and the scarcity of supply caches uncovered could be explained by enemy documents captured on 8 May in the area of operation. According to these documents, the enemy had anticipated that U.S. and ARVN operations would probably be launched into Cambodia after Sihanouk was deposed as Chief of State, and after Lon Nol had issued an ultimatum giving the VC/NVA until 15 March to vacate Cambodia. Among these documents, there was a typewritten directive issued by the B-3 Front Headquarters on 17 March 1970 and addressed to its subordinate units. The text of the directive read as follows:

Information that we have collected indicates that the enemy (US-RVN forces) will probably launch operations into our area. As a result, all of our bases and supply points will be concealed and camouflaged to prevent their discovery by the enemy. Documents and records should be carefully packed and ready to be moved at any moment. All of our installations, to include hospitals and dispensaries should be safeguarded and patrols should be extensive enough to provide early detection of enemy penetrations. All of our positions should be kept secret and radio communications severely restricted. Troops are forbidden to fire their weapons in hunting and to fish by detonating grenades in the Ta Bop River. Cadres of all echelons will educate their subordinates to strictly carry out these orders. In no instances should they let themselves or their weapons and documents be captured by the enemy. When facing enemy forces, they should attempt to break away and avoid shooting back. Our purpose is to conserve forces as much as we can.

BINH TAY II

II Corps initiated BINH TAY II on 14 May 1970, against Base Area 701 and B-3 Front units such as the 24th, 28th or 66th Regiments and the 40th Artillery Regiment. Historically, these units would displace toward this base area and from there launch

attacks against our border camps in Darlac and Pleiku Provinces.

(Map 19)

According to II Corps plans, the 22d Infantry Division was assigned to carry out this task. After the landing zones had been extensively bombarded by U.S. tactical air, two regiments of the 22d Division, the 40th and 47th, were inserted by U.S. helicopters into the north of Base Area 701. At the same time, the 3d Armored Cavalry Squadron and reconnaissance elements of the 22d Division also crossed the border and attacked from the south in order to link up with the two infantry regiments in the north. Meanwhile, a U.S. air cavalry unit conducted patrols to the west to interdict all enemy evasive efforts.

As soon as they landed, troops of the 40th Regiment discovered an enemy ammunition cache containing about two tons of 82 mm mortar rounds and B-40 rockets. Continuing their push southward, ARVN infantry elements discovered two additional enemy caches on 17 May from which they seized 100 AK-47 rifles, 6 crew-served weapons, 10,000 lbs. of rice and 660 kilos of peanuts. On 18 May, elements of the 47th Regiment again found an enemy supply cache and seized 159 assorted weapons. Extending their search, our troops discovered an enemy dispensary where they seized 2,000 lbs. of medicine and some surgical equipment still in original packings. The next day, 19 May, all elements of the 47th Regiment reported contact with the enemy. When the fighting abated, friendly forces discovered 2 enemy caches and seized 87 individual weapons and 17 crew-served weapons, including 7 Chicom flame throwers. On the friendly side, one was killed and four wounded.

By 24 May, the entire enemy base area had been thoroughly searched by our forces and the operation was considered successfully accomplished. On 25 May, the 3d Armored Cavalry Squadron and the 40th Regiment began withdrawing from the area of operation and they were assembled at Border Camp Thang Duc in Military Region 2 during the morning of 26 May. The 47th Regiment soon followed and was back in Military Region 2 in the morning of 27 May when the operation was officially terminated.

During their two-week foray into Base Area 701, ARVN forces made scattered contact only with enemy elements guarding supply installations or with guerrillas. No contact was ever made with any of the enemy's major force units which in all probability had displaced deep inside Cambodia to conserve their forces. Despite this, our forces managed to kill 73 enemy and detain 6 others.

BINH TAY III

This operation was conducted by the ARVN 23d Infantry Division and consisted of three phases. Phase 1, from 20 May to 3 June 1970, and phase 2, from 4 to 12 June 1970, were intended to destroy enemy Base Area 740 which was located in Cambodia west of Quang Duc and Darlac Provinces (Map 19)

Within Base Area 740, our intelligence reports indicated the presence of the 251st Transportation Battalion, the K-394 Artillery Battalion (-) and possibly some elements of the NVA 33d Regiment. An enemy document captured on 10 May 1970 by CIDG troops had revealed the presence of this regiment in the area. In addition to these units, the enemy document also indicated that this was an active area of transit for NVA transportation groups and COSVN rear service units. In the northern part of this base area, our intelligence reported the presence of the 301st Logistic Unit and the 401st Sapper Battalion of Darlac Province. This area was used by the enemy as a way-station for transportation or infiltration groups en route between Base Areas 701 and 740.

The 23d Division organized its units into armor-infantry task forces. For Phase 1 of the operation (20 May to 3 June 1970), there were two task forces:

Task Force 8:

Headquarters, 8th Armored Cavalry Squadron;
1st, 2d, 3d Troops, 8th ACS;
3d Battalion, 44th Infantry Regiment;
413th Montagnard Strike Force;
C Company, 23d Engineer Battalion.

Task Force 45:

Headquarters, 45th Infantry Regiment;
1st, 3d, and 4th Battalions, 45th Regiment;
45th and 53d Reconnaissance Companies.

In Phase 2 (from 4 to 12 June 1970), the task forces were reorganized as follows:

Task Force 8:

Headquarters, 8th Armored Cavalry Squadron;
1st, 2d and 3d Troops, 8th ACS;
412th and 413th Montagnard Strike Forces.

Task Force 44:

Headquarters, 44th Regiment;
1st and 3d Battalions, 44th Regiment and 3d Battalion, 53d Rgt;
53d Reconnaissance Company;
C Company, 23d Combat Engineer Battalion.

Task Force 45:

Headquarters, 45th Regiment;
1st, 3d and 4th Battalions, 45th Regiment;
45th Reconnaissance Company.

On 20 May 1970, Task Forces 8 and 45 initiated operations against Base Area 740. TF 45 was inserted by U.S. helicopters into the northern part of the base area while TF 8 advanced toward the southern part. Meanwhile, elements of the 7/17 U.S. Air Cavalry Battalion conducted interdiction patrols over the west and north of the objective area and CIDG units operated along the border to block enemy evasions into Military Region 2. From the RVN side of the border, 8" and 175-mm U.S. artillery units provided firepower support for ARVN forces in the objective area.

The heliborne assault by TF 45 was accomplished as planned despite bad weather, but met with no enemy resistance. TF 8, which was moving into the roughest terrain, had to change its axis of progress several times. During the first day, our forces made only sporadic contact with the enemy but found several enemy caches containing rice and medicine. While advancing toward the objective and searching for enemy caches, our forces met with several columns of refugees

moving out of the area toward South Vietnam. The most remarkable exploit by our forces in this base area was the destruction of a 10-truck convoy by U.S. gunships and another 4 trucks by ARVN infantry units. ARVN forces also seized two 1/4-ton trucks left behind by the enemy.

During the entire duration of the operation in this enemy base area, our forces made 34 contacts of squad and company size with the enemy. These contacts were scattered and took place mostly during the first few days. The enemy opened fire only when our units happened to be in the vicinity of his supply caches. It was usually impossible for our forces to determine in these instances the designation or size of the enemy force encountered because of our habit to call for artillery or airstrikes whenever contact was made. During Phase 1 of the operation, our forces discovered several enemy food caches and seized an important quantity of weapons. All of the weapons and rice was hauled back to South Vietnam by U.S. helicopters. In all probability, those enemy elements which came into contact with our forces in the objective area were part of logistic or rear service units responsible for the security of installations and supply points. Apparently, the enemy's main force units had withdrawn farther into Cambodia prior to our operation. During Phase 1, our forces suffered 29 killed and 77 wounded while inflicting on the enemy 96 killed, 1 detained and 1 rallier.

Phase 1 ended on 3 June as Task Force 8 withdrew from the area of operations but continued security of Route No. 14 from Duc Lap to Bu Prang. Phase 2 began on 4 June. While Task Force 45 continued search activities in the area of the Nam Lyr mountain range, Task Force 44 (-) was inserted north of TF 45 and the U.S. 21st Cavalry continued its patrols west and northwest of the area of operation. On 9 June, U.S. air cavalry elements detected an enemy company-size unit on the move. Tactical air and gunships swarmed over and inflicted serious losses on the enemy unit as evidenced by

observation from the air. Rough terrain, however, prevented our 44th Regiment from going in to verify the results; the operation was then temporarily suspended on 12 June 1970.

After one week of refitting and recuperation, the 23d Division initiated Phase 3 of the operation. During this phase, all three task forces, the 8th, 44th, and 45th were committed. On 19 June, TF 44 and 45 made heliborne assaults into an area sandwiched between Base Area 201 and 740. Two fire support bases were established, one in Cambodia for the support of TF 45 and the other in the RVN for the support of TF 44. Throughout the nine days of Phase 3, ARVN forces only made sporadic contact with the enemy but discovered an important enemy supply cache. Both task forces were extracted from Cambodia to Ban Don on 27 June. From Ban Don, they moved by trucks back to Ban Me Thuot where the last element arrived at 1630 hours the same day.

Friendly casualties during Phase 3 were light as compared to the enemy's and in proportion to the size of forces committed and the duration of the operation. Our forces suffered 38 killed, 113 wounded, and 2 missing while inflicting on the enemy 149 killed, 2 detained and 1 rallier. Our losses thus amounted to only one-fourth of the enemy's. In addition, our forces seized 581 individual and 85 crew-served weapons and 447 tons of rice. Another 81 tons of rice were destroyed on the spot. Most weapons captured in this area were either rusty or in bad condition; the more serviceable weapons had probably been removed prior to the operation.

This was the first division-size operation ever conducted by the 23rd Infantry Division. As compared to the other ten ARVN divisions, the 23rd had only modest capabilities in terms of combat effectiveness and overall performance.

The Evacuation of Khmer Forces from Ratanakiri Province

As a result of the spreading war and the enemy's pressure on Phnom Penh, the Cambodian government found it imperative to conserve its meager military forces by restricting them to the defense of

populous and resource-rich areas. The FANK maintained two isolated military bases in Ratanakiri Province Cambodia - Ba Kev and Labang Siek - which were not only difficult to defend but also absorbed substantial forces which were more needed for the defense of Phnom Penh. Unable to evacuate these bases by themselves, the FANK asked the RVN and U.S. for help. After discussing the evacuation of Ba Kev and Labang Siek with a FANK mission in Saigon, the JGS and MACV decided to turn this task over to II Corps and U.S. Field Force I. The operation was designated BINH TAY IV. (Map 21)

On 21 June 1970, II Corps assigned to the 22d Division the task of evacuating all equipment, materials, vehicles, weapons and military dependents from these two Cambodian bases. For the accomplishment of this task, the 22d Division was reinforced with armor, ranger and engineer units. Support assets were to be provided by the U.S. Field Force I, but only to the extent that it was authorized; in other words, U.S. assets were not to be committed beyond the 30-km limit from the RVN border.

To carry out its mission, the 22d Division organized its units into 4 task forces:

Task Force 214:

- 14th Armored Cavalry Squadron;
- 23d Ranger Battalion;
- 1 Engineer Platoon, 22d Combat Engineer Battalion;
- 1 105-mm battery (-) of four pieces.

Task Force 247:

- 47th Infantry Regiment (2 battalions);
- 1 engineer platoon, 22d Combat Engineer Battalion;
- 1 mixed 105-mm/155-mm battery of six pieces.

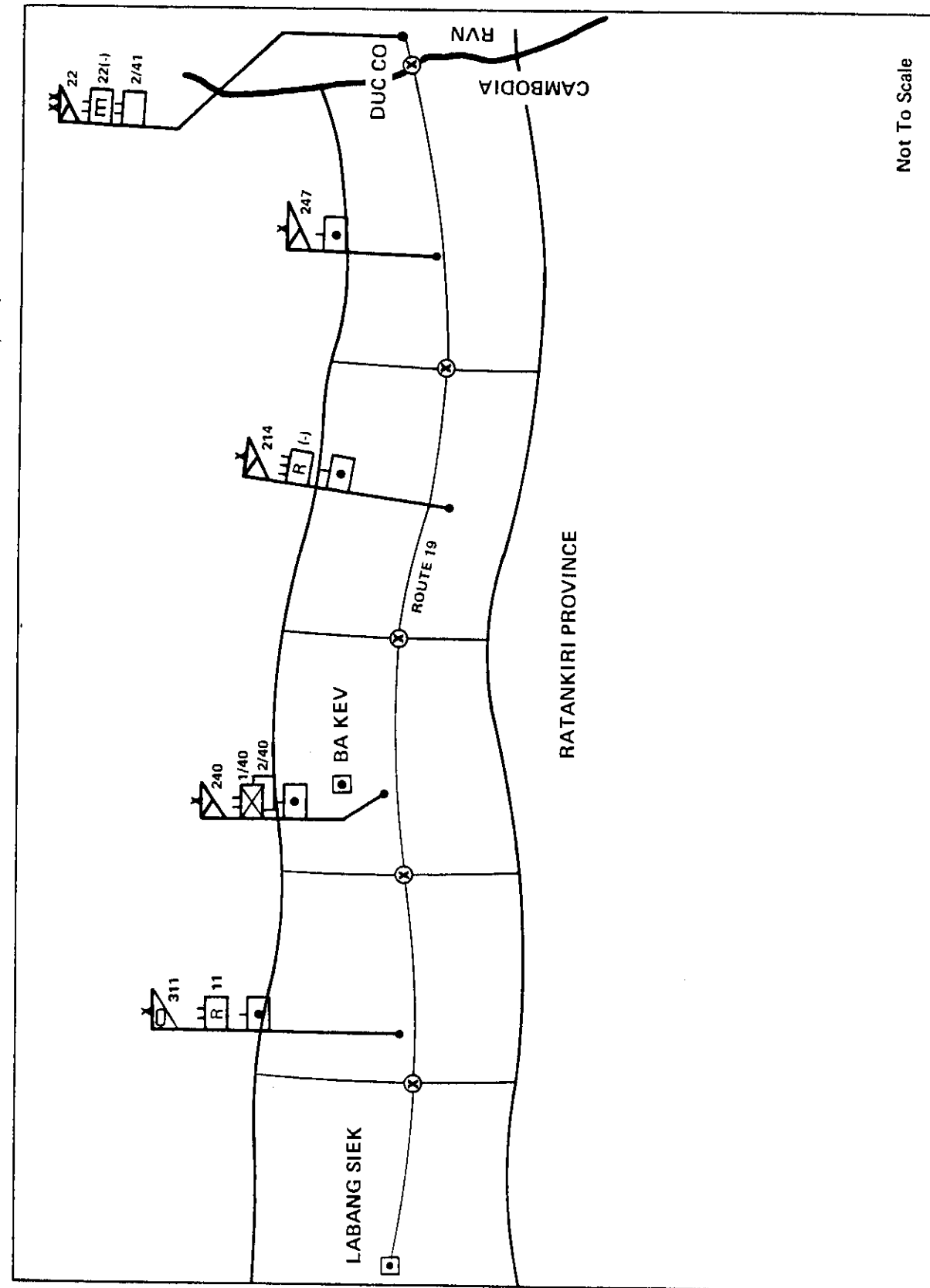
Task Force 240:

- 45th Infantry Regiment (6 battalions);
- 1 engineer platoon, 22d Combat Engineer Battalion;
- 1 mixed 105-mm/155-mm battery of six pieces.

Task Force 311:

- 3d Armored Cavalry Squadron;

Map 21 - The Evacuation of Khmer Forces from Ratankiri Province (BINH TAY 4)



11th Ranger Battalion;

1 engineer company, 22d Combat Engineer Battalion;

1 mixed 105-mm/155-mm battery of 6 pieces.

The operational plan of the 22d Division called for securing Route No. 19 from the RVN border westwards to Ba Kev, which was also the main axis of progress. Both flanks of this axis would be protected by U.S. air cavalry units and fire support would be provided by U.S. medium and heavy artillery units with their 8" howitzers and 175-mm guns positioned along Route No. 19 on the RVN side of the border. FANK troops at Labang Siek would fall back to Ba Kev, a distance of approximately 35 km by Route No. 19, during the first stage. From Ba Kev, part of the total contingent of Khmer troops from both bases would be airlifted and part of them would move by trucks toward Duc Co, approximately 70 km east on Route No. 19, which was the first receiving station. From Duc Co, the Khmer troop contingent would be directed toward Enari Base at Pleiku. The Special Forces camp at Duc Co was selected as the divisions's forward CP for the duration of the operation.

To complete preparations for the operation, the 22d Division moved its units from Pleiku and Binh Dinh to Duc Co, the staging area, by road. The 40th Regiment and one battalion of the 47th Regiment, however, were airlifted by U.S. aircraft from Binh Dinh directly to Duc Co. A total of 16 C-130 sorties completed this troop movement by noon of 23 June. The other battalion of the 47th Regiment was helilifted to Duc Co from Pleiku by 1930 hours the same day. The entire operational force, to include the forward CP of the 22d Division and all of its task forces, were thus assembled at Duc Co on 23 June.

Another troop movement which had not been planned but was completed on 23 June was the airlift of one company of the 22d Ranger Battalion to Labang Siek. This company was to protect the Labang Siek airfield while U.S. aircraft picked up the Khmer garrison. The purpose of this change in plans was to speed up the evacuation of

Labang Siek.

At 0800 hours on 26 June, Task Force 214 began to move from Duc Co toward the Cambodian border along Route 19, followed immediately by the 20th Combat Engineer Battalion, Task Force 247 and Task Force 311. During the advance, U.S. observation planes and air cavalry gunships flew cover on both flanks to the north and south of the axis. Task Force 240, which was to be helilifted from Duc Co to a landing zone east of Ba Kev, had to delay embarkation until 1000 hours because of bad weather and heavy rains. By 1545 hours, all helilift movements were completed, and TF 240 was in Ba Kev along with its artillery battery. On their return trip to Duc Co, U.S. helicopters picked up a number of Khmer refugees at Ba Kev. Then at 1945 hours the same day, TF 311 linked up with TF 240 at Ba Kev as planned. The timely progress of ARVN task forces along Route 19 had been made possible by the rapid work done by ARVN engineers along the axis of advance. About 200 Khmer refugees at Ba Kev were also evacuated toward Duc Co during the day. To provide support for ARVN task forces during the night, U.S. gunships and flareships flew cover missions over the area of operation until daylight.

During the morning of 25 June, TF 311 continued its westward advance along Route 19 in order to clear the road toward Labang Siek and to link up with the Khmer garrison moving eastward from the base. From Labang Siek, a convoy of 111 mixed military and civilian vehicles began to move out at 0900 hours toward the RVN border. The convoy was joined by many Khmer refugees moving on foot. At approximately 1400 hours, this convoy linked up with TF 311 and continued its journey toward Ba Kev. Upon reaching Ba Kev, all Khmer refugees from Labang Siek were picked up by U.S. helicopters and transported to Duc Co. When the day was over, they were all safe at Duc Co. During the night, however, another influx of 600 Khmer refugees from Labang Siek reached Ba Kev.

During the day of 25 June, the 214th Battalion was helilifted from Ba Kev to reinforce TF 214 because of intelligence reports that the enemy would try to interdict Route 19 in its area of operation.

TF 214 was already thinly spread over a large area. At night, U.S. flareships and gunships continued their support mission over the area of operation.

On 26 June, beginning at 0750 hours, a convoy of approximately 30 vehicles carrying Khmer refugees moved out of Ba Kev toward the RVN border. At the same time, U.S. helicopters also picked up the remainder of Khmer refugees at Ba Kev and transported them to Duc Co. By late afternoon of 26 June, the evacuation of this Cambodian base had been completed to include the garrison troops, their equipment, dependents, and other refugees. While the movement was in progress from Ba Kev, at Duc Co, those Khmer troops, dependents and refugees who had been there the previous day, were transported to Camp Enari Pleiku where they were accommodated and fed by RVN provincial authorities, pending return to Phnom Penh.

After the evacuation of Ba Kev had been completed, our ARVN task forces began to withdraw from Cambodia. At noon on 26 June, TF 240 was the first to be extracted by U.S. helicopters. By 1500 hours, the entire task force had been assembled at Duc Co. From Duc Co, the task force boarded U.S. C-130 cargo planes to return to Binh Dinh. Then Task Force 311, followed by TF 214 and TF 247 also successively withdrew by road toward the RVN border. The last ARVN element of TF 311 crossed the border at 1830 hours. While TF 247 continued to move toward Pleiku, TF 311 and 214 remained at Duc Co for the night.

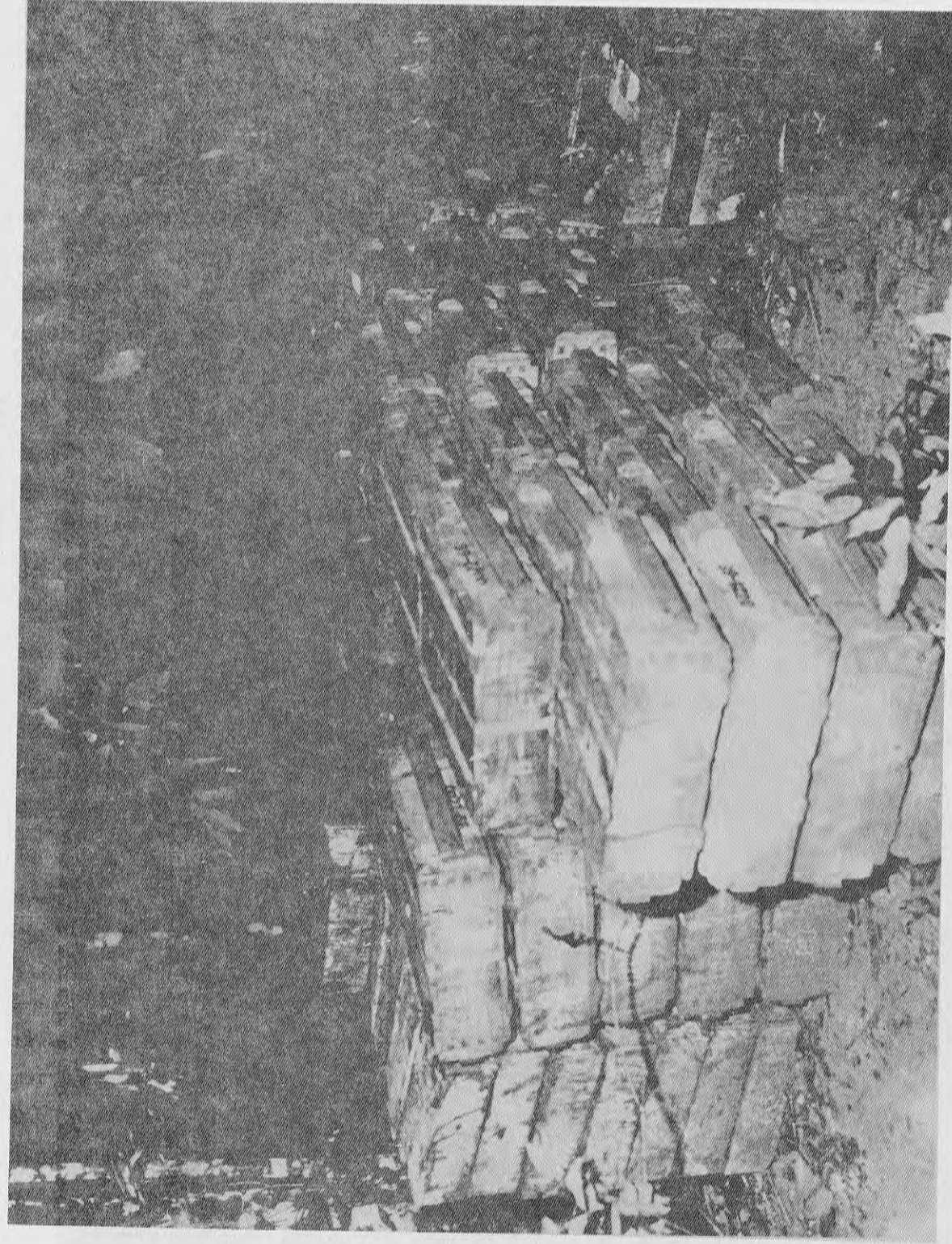
The entire operation was considered terminated on 27 June 1970 after the evacuation of Labang Siek and Ba Kev had been completed. By that date, a total of 7,571 Khmer to include troops, dependents and refugees, had been accommodated at Camp Enari in Pleiku. Among the weapons evacuated from both Cambodian military bases were four 76-mm artillery pieces and several cal .50 machine guns. ARVN casualties during the operation amounted to two killed and eight wounded. The enemy lost six killed and two individual weapons.

Table 1 — Recapitulation of Results, ARVN II Corps and U.S. Field Force I Cross Border Operations

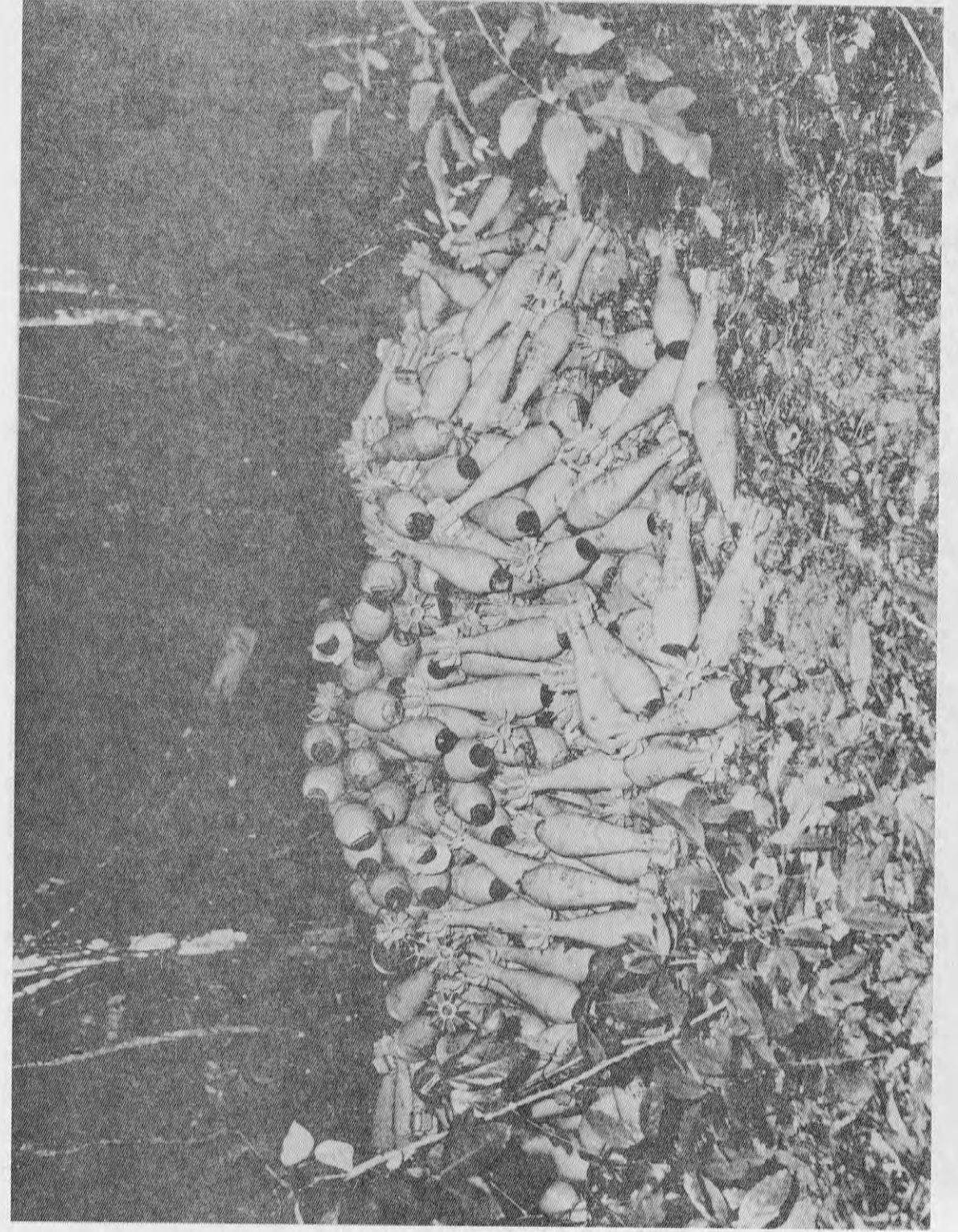
Operation	Friendly Losses			Enemy Losses					
	KIA	WIA	MIA	Killed	Detained	Rallier	C-S Weapons	Indiv. Weapons	Rice (tons)
BINH TAY I	63	118	0	212	7	10	20	859	591
BINH TAY II	7	34	0	73	6	0	136	476	88.8
BINH TAY III	38	113	2	149	2	1	85	581	447
BINH TAY IV	2	8	0	6	0	0	0	2	0



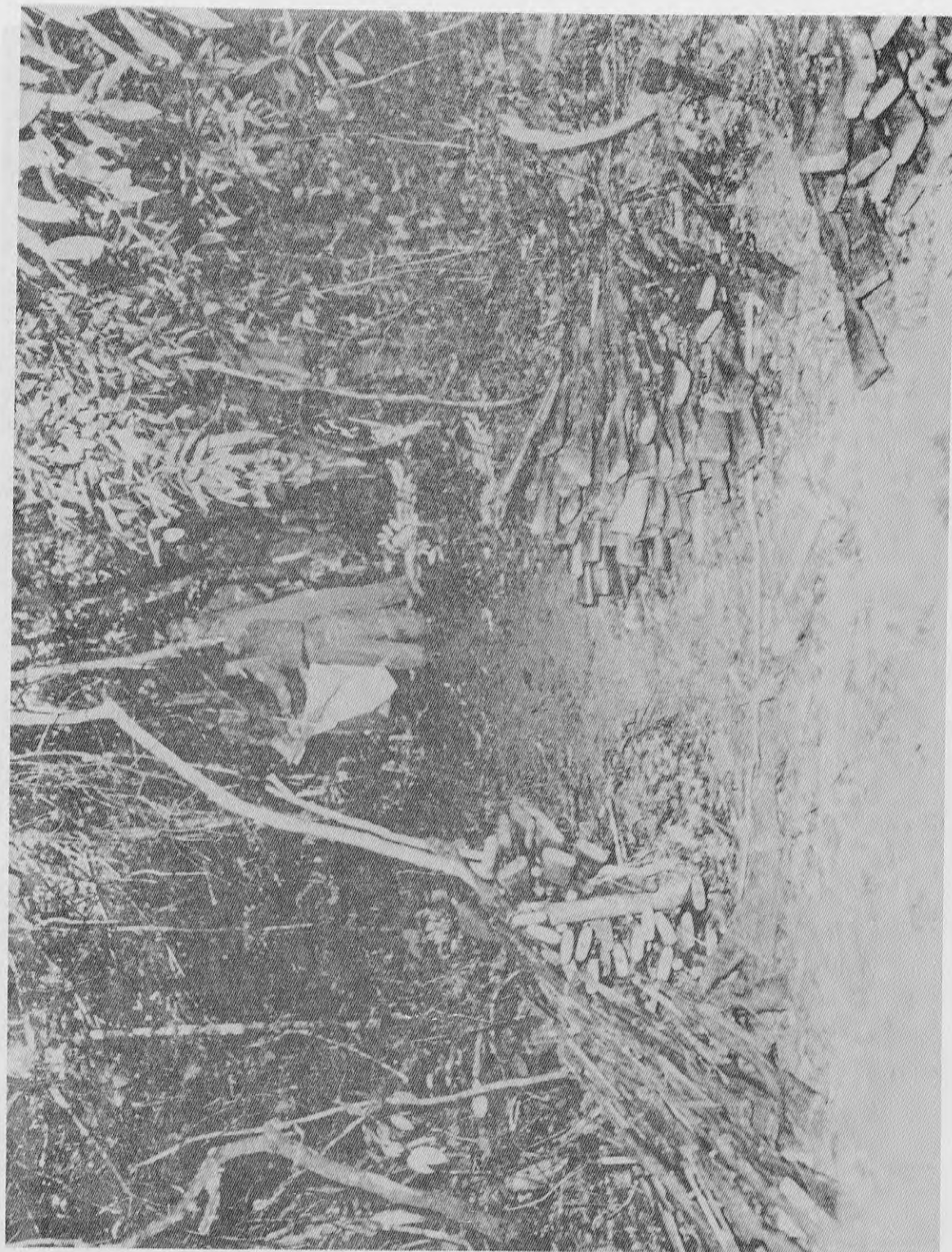
120-mm Mortar Captured during BINH TAY III



Crates of Ammunition Captured during BINH TAY III



82-mm Mortar Ammunition Captured during BINH TAY III



Enemy Small Arms Captured during BINH TAY III

CHAPTER V

Cooperation and Coordination from 30 April to 30 June 1970

U.S.-RVN Cooperation and Coordination

For the JGS, the question of launching ground operations across the national border to destroy NVA and VC logistic bases and supply points was not simply a military question; such an incursion would have important political ramifications as well. For his part, President Nguyen Van Thieu, being a senior and experienced military officer, understood very well the military value to the RVNAF/U.S. military effort to be derived from destroying the enemy bases in Cambodia. Barely one day after Sihanouk was deposed, President Thieu declared, "If Cambodia and South Vietnam and her allies cooperate along the border, then I believe the Communists would find it impossible to stay." Therefore, when General Abrams, COMUSMACV consulted with the JGS on this question, General Cao Van Vien, Chief of the JGS, immediately reported to President Thieu for guidance and a decision. Before authorizing the RVNAF to conduct operations into Cambodia, President Thieu certainly would have consulted the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon and obtained his concurrence and support. He had several reasons for doing this. In the first place, no matter how badly the RVN wanted to destroy enemy bases beyond its border, it would not be able to do so alone, without American concurrence and support. Second, South Vietnam was still officially estranged from Cambodia; there had been no diplomatic relations between the two countries during the last seven years. Any military incursion into Cambodia, which was a declared neutral state, would have to be pre-arranged under American political auspices.

But what concerned President Thieu most was RVNAF military

capabilities and South Vietnam's own security problem.

Despite continued development and modernization, the RVNAF had yet to prove their combat capabilities in large-scale military operations, particularly when these operations were to take place in the unfamiliar terrain of a neighboring country. Besides, what would happen to South Vietnam's own backyard if the bulk of its main force units were to move away, leaving the maintenance of security in the hands of the unreliable RF and PF troops? But the major problem with large-scale, cross-border operations seemed to be the RVNAF's own limitations in support assets, particularly artillery, helicopters and tactical air.

Most ARVN military assets belonged to infantry divisions but were semi-permanently committed to the support of the country-wide base and outpost system. Some divisional artillery units were, therefore, deployed piecemeal by sections of two pieces each all over the country to provide area-type support. If they were to be reassembled into batteries and battalions and committed to operations beyond the border, then there would be a void in firepower support within South Vietnam and territorial security would be in jeopardy. No outpost or hamlet under attack would then be able to hold without artillery support.

The status of heliborne mobility was even worse. At this time, there was only one UH-1 squadron available for operational purposes in each corps area. Other squadrons, being newly activated, were still undergoing training. Although operational for some time, our helicopter squadrons were still inexperienced in night operations and in formation flights required for large-scale heliborne assaults. In addition, a VNAF helicopter was not unlike a jack-of-all-trades; it could be used for any type of mission: helilift, medevac or resupply, but never solely for any single purpose. For these reasons, the RVNAF could not afford to devote all helicopter assets to cross-border operations; daily needs for resupply and medevac within each corps area would not allow that. Also, the RVNAF at that time did not have the greater capacity CH-47 and depended entirely on U.S. Army aviation units for this type of transport.

As far as tactical air was concerned, the RVNAF were seriously

handicapped in long-range support assets. In early 1970, the VNAF had only five squadrons of mixed A-1H, A-37 and F-5A fighter-bombers. These aircraft had low speed and limited load capacity; their performance was also affected by adverse weather conditions. As a result, even within the country, tactical air support for outposts under attack or combat operations usually depended on the U.S. Air Force. It was obvious that in its current status, the VNAF would not be able to contribute much to the support of cross-border operations.

Both the JGS and MACV were well aware of these shortcomings. To alleviate the territorial security burden on the RVNAF and enable them to devote all of their efforts to the Cambodian theater of operation, the JGS and MACV conducted a comprehensive reassessment of the security situation. Decisions were made as to which ARVN units could be redeployed from their tactical areas of responsibility without compromising security, which areas could be effectively handled by territorial forces alone, and which areas would require either a takeover by U.S. and FWMA forces or an extension of their tactical areas of responsibility once ARVN units were removed. As far as support was concerned, it was agreed that U.S. forces would perform firepower, medevac and resupply missions within the country in the place of RVNAF units, so as to release them for cross-border activities.

During April 1970, the RVNAF were thus able to initiate operational activities in Cambodia without concern for security and support problems back home. During these initial operations, no U.S. advisers accompanied ARVN units into Cambodia; they were still not authorized to cross the RVN border. Despite this apparent non-involvement, U.S. forces provided maximum support for these operations. During Operation TOAN THANG 41, for example, the U.S. Field Force II made loans of M4T6 pontoons, enabling III Corps to establish river-crossing facilities for its armored vehicles. The U.S. 25th Infantry Division also cooperated in establishing a screen along the western bank of the Vam Co East River inside South Vietnam to block enemy escape routes. To help increase the number of serviceable armored vehicles required for combat operations, the U.S. Field Force II reinforced the 3rd Area Logistics Command with

tracked vehicle repair teams. Within the 24 hours before operation TOAN THANG 42 was to be launched, these teams helped repair eight unserviceable T-113's for the 18th Armored Cavalry Squadron and replace another six M-41 tanks. As a result, the number of ARVN serviceable armored vehicles committed in this operation was increased significantly. Also, during this operation, U.S. command and gunships flew support missions for ARVN units although they never landed on Cambodian soil.

These events clearly indicated that not only had the U.S. consented to cross-border operations by the RVNAF, it was also fully backing them to the extent permitted by its policies. The U.S. was well aware that without its consent and support, the RVNAF would hardly be able to initiate these operations by themselves. American support became stronger and more direct beginning on 1 May 1970 when U.S. forces received the green light to participate in the Cambodian incursion. As of that date, U.S. advisers were also authorized to accompany ARVN units into Cambodia within the self-imposed limit of 30 km or 21.7 miles. As a result, ARVN units in Cambodia began to receive artillery support from heavier U.S. 8" and 175-mm pieces in addition to their organic 105-mm and 155-mm howitzers. To each ARVN task force was attached U.S. artillery forward observers from the U.S. 23rd Artillery Group. U.S. tactical air and B-52 sorties were also increased for the benefit of ARVN units. This made quite a difference for these ARVN units which prior to 1 May had only the weaker support of the Vietnam Air Force.

For the better use of combined RVN-U.S. firepower assets, senior U.S. advisors to ARVN task forces initiated the establishment of fire coordination centers (FCC) whose members included the senior adviser, a U.S. artillery officer, an ARVN forward artillery observer, and a VNAF forward air controller team. These FCCs provided for the maximum use of both United States and RVN artillery and air firepower.

RVN-Khmer Cooperation and Coordination

Immediately after General Lon Nol took power, GVN Vice President

Nguyen Cao Ky made secret trips to Phnom Penh twice during April 1970 and an official visit in early May. During this official visit, he was accompanied by Lt. General Nguyen Van Vy, our Minister of Defense. These visits had the objectives of reestablishing diplomatic relations between the RVN and Cambodia and discussing measures of mutual assistance between the two countries. Since the new Cambodian regime had proved inimical to North Vietnam, in contrast to Sihanouk's policies, its survival was deemed of vital importance to South Vietnam's security.

Following Vice President Ky's shuttles between Saigon and Phnom Penh, Colonel Lon Non, younger brother of General Lon Nol, appeared several times in Saigon at the Independence Palace and had contacts with other GVN high-ranking officials. Also, to solve the problem of Vietnamese residents in Cambodia living in refugee camps and estimated at between 60,000 and 75,000 a GVN delegation headed by Tran Nguon Phieu, Minister of Public Health and Education, flew to Phnom Penh in April 1970 to negotiate their repatriation with the Cambodian authorities. Members of this delegation also included representatives of the Ministry of Defense and the Joint General Staff, whose mission it was to assess the situation and study measures for the evacuation of Vietnamese residents.

In retrospect from a legal point of view, it is clearly evident that the RVNAF incursion into Cambodia was conducted with the consent and authorization of the Cambodian government. President Thieu in effect declared to the foreign and domestic press on 8 May 1970 that between himself and General Lon Nol, there had been "agreement in principle" two or three days before the initiation of cross-border operations. To further cement the bonds of friendship between the two countries after the RVNAF had successfully cleared the Mekong River and Kompong Cham, President Thieu flew to Neak Luong where he paid a courtesy visit to General Lon Nol. This first meeting between the two national leaders was also attended by General Cao Van Vien, Chief of the JGS, and the Vietnamese field commanders who had directed the clearing operations, Lt. General Do Cao Tri and Lt. General Ngo Dzu. Playing host to the Cambodian guests, President Thieu entertained

them with a luncheon catered by the famous Hotel Caravelle in Saigon. The food and drink were flown from Saigon to Neak Luong by VNAF helicopters.

For purposes of coordinating combined activities, field commanders of both nations shuttled frequently between South Vietnam and Cambodia. This was particularly true of the commanders of MR-1 and MR-2 on the Khmer side and III Corps and IV Corps on the RVNAF side. At the next lower level, ARVN task force commanders usually met with Cambodian province and district chiefs for the purpose of operational planning.

To provide effective support for combined RVNAF and FANK operations in border areas, straddling both the RVN MR-4 and the Khmer MR-2, the Delta Military Assistance Command (DMAC) took the initiative in establishing a Combined Operations Center (COC) at the Chi Lang Training Center in Chau Doc Province. Although primarily a U.S.-RVNAF facility, staffed by IV Corps and DMAC representatives, this center also included FANK liaison officers. The Chi Lang COC was responsible for the effectively coordinated support activities for river convoys bringing supplies to Phnom Penh. An average of 8 to 12 river convoys reached the Khmer capital each month with needed supplies such as rice, fuel, ammunition, and other basic commodities. The Mekong River had become a most vital supply route for the Cambodian capital ever since road communication with the Tonle Sap and Battambang, two food-rich areas of the country, was interdicted in early August 1970 by Khmer communists and NVA forces. The survival of the new Khmer regime and the population of Phnom Penh, therefore, depended to a great extent on the safeguarding of the Mekong River. This could not be done without the assistance of the RVN and its armed forces.

In tactical matters, one area of cooperation which benefited the FANK most was intelligence support. For years, intelligence work had become routine for the RVN and U.S. forces who had to constantly monitor the enemy and his activities in South Vietnam. This knowledge and experience proved of tremendous value to combat operations in Cambodia,

since the NVA units involved there were the same ones that had been operating in South Vietnam. For the FANK, however, NVA forces were something entirely unfamiliar because they had been primarily concerned with the local Khmer communists. So an intelligence collection network was set up in Cambodian provinces and districts adjacent to South Vietnam by the ARVN 101st Unit which operated under the control of our J-2, JGS, from the very beginning of the Cambodian incursion. During the first two months of its operation, May and June 1970, it passed on all intelligence collected by ARVN combat units concerning Khmer security to the FANK General Staff because no FANK units operated alongside ARVN units during this period. With the advent of combined RVNAF-FANK operations in Cambodia, intelligence became a vital area of cooperation and coordination. To make this cooperation and coordination more significant, the JGS and the FANK General Staff came to an agreement that all Khmer communist prisoners captured by ARVN forces would be turned over to FANK units for interrogation and exploitation. When the areas around Phnom Penh were penetrated and attacked, several Vietnamese Communist sappers were captured by the FANK, but the G-2 Division of the FANK General Staff, which lacked background on NVA and VC forces, was unable to exploit them properly. To assist the FANK General Staff in this unfamiliar task, the J-2, JGS began to detach its interrogation teams to Phnom Penh. These teams proved of tremendous assistance to the G-2, FANK General Staff because of their familiarity with enemy units, their coded designation system and their background.

Cooperation and coordination in intelligence activities between the RVNAF and the FANK became ever closer after the initiation of tripartite meetings, in July 1970. During these meetings, an important item on the agenda was a briefing on enemy activities concerning both South Vietnam and Cambodia, conducted by the J-2 of MACV or our JGS.¹

¹Major General William E. Potts, U.S. Army or Colonel Hoang Ngoc Lung, ARVN

With regard to manpower and equipment required for the development of the FANK, the RVN was also most helpful. In addition to the 4,000 CIDG troopers of Khmer origin made available to the FANK, the JGS and MACV also eventually shipped more than 10,000 captured AK-47 assault rifles and approximately 7,200 surplus M2 carbines to Phnom Penh. These 4,000 CIDG troops contributed effectively to the defense of Phnom Penh by defeating attacks launched by NVA units into the Cambodian capital's surrounding areas. In addition, the GVN also authorized Cambodian recruiters entry into areas where Vietnamese of Khmer descent resided in the Mekong Delta, and enabled them to recruit former KKK members who had served as CIDG troops of the RVN Special Forces, and fought in border areas for many years.

A major problem that the FANK General Staff had to face in its efforts to expand Khmer combat forces was the lack of a good training base and training facilities. To assist the FANK in solving this problem which was made more difficult by increased fighting and a deteriorating situation, the JGS and MACV agreed to provide training for the FANK at military schools and training centers in South Vietnam. As the first step, approximately 5,500 Khmer recruits were given basic training every month at the Chi Lang Training Center in Chau Doc Province. The RVNAF also provided transportation for Khmer students to and from Chi Lang, either by VNAF planes or by river supply convoys. All training expenses and supplies incurred by Khmer trainees were first covered by RVNAF funds which were later reimbursed by MACV. The kind of modern training provided by the RVNAF was very beneficial to the FANK, whether in basic military training or in specialist training, because being organized by the French and equipped with obsolescent weapons, the FANK had very low combat capabilities and practically no combat experience. To familiarize Khmer field grade officers with modern warfare tactics and techniques, the RVNAF also conducted a special training course for 28 FANK majors and lieutenant colonels at the Dalat Command and Staff College in late December 1970. These graduates were later assigned command responsibilities in FANK units.

Also to assist the FANK in their development efforts, the JGS and MACV conducted several orientation tours for high-ranking Khmer officers and governmental officials during which they observed and learned organizational and operational techniques at RVNAF agencies and major units. In particular, Khmer officials of province and district levels paid several visits to the provinces of Vinh Binh and Ba Xuyen where they had the opportunity to observe the pacification and development program at work among the local population, mostly Vietnamese of Khmer descent.

Air support was another major area of close cooperation between the RVNAF and the FANK. After its withdrawal from Cambodia on 30 June 1970, the U.S. continued to conduct some air activity in Cambodia, especially in the area of Kratie-Stung Treng, northeast of Phnom Penh, in order to interdict NVA infiltration and prevent return of the NVA to its destroyed base areas near the border. Because of political sensitivities, U.S. aircraft were not authorized to land in Cambodia after 30 June 1970; but they could perform overflight support missions. U.S. aircraft were also denied the offensive role. During their support missions, such as flying air cover for river convoys, U.S. gunships were allowed to return fire only when being fired at from the ground. The Khmer Air Force, meanwhile, had only a modest capability. It included a few MIG-15 and 17 aircraft which were grounded most of the time for lack of replacement parts, hence unavailable for operational support. To increase support for the FANK, and with the approval of the Khmer government, the VNAF, in early August 1970, detached two A-1 Skyraider flights (six aircraft), several observation planes and two AC-119 flare-gunships to Pochentong airfield on a permanent basis. All VNAF support missions in Cambodia were coordinated by the Air Support Operations Center (ASOC), VNAF Air Operations Command, which was installed at Khmer Air Force Headquarters. In addition, to help the FANK solve their medical evacuation and resupply problems, MACV loaned six UH-1H helicopters to the VNAF, all placed under the control of the VNAF ASOC at Pochentong. These six helicopters were earmarked for the Khmer Air Force but temporarily operated by VNAF crews for the support

of Khmer ground troops, since Khmer helicopter flight crews were undergoing training in Saigon. Repair and maintenance on these helicopters was performed by VNAF specialist teams at Pochentong. They were eventually taken over by Khmer Air Force maintenance crews still undergoing training. But air rescue missions were all performed by VNAF aircraft with ground security provided by FANK or RVNAF units in their respective tactical areas of responsibility.

During the night of 21 January 1971, NVA sappers penetrated the Pochentong Air Base located approximately ten kilometers west of Phnom Penh and conducted a most damaging sabotage which affected Khmer capability to provide air support. While the civilian aviation terminal suffered only physical damage, almost all Khmer military aircraft (nearly 98%) were destroyed. The only Caravelle jet transport of Air Cambodge escaped sure destruction because it was in Bangkok when the sabotage took place. The Caravelle had just completed its official mission, bringing back General Lon Nol from Saigon in the morning and flew on to Bangkok that very afternoon. Strange as it may have appeared, the VNAF section at Pochentong was unaffected by the sabotage. No VNAF aircraft among the 20 fighter-bombers, observation planes, and gunships suffered any damage because the VNAF area was heavily guarded by its own troops. But the seemingly selective sabotage of NVA sappers, unfortunately, gave rise to false rumors that it was conducted by RVN troops.²

In addition to tactical training, logistic and air support, the JGS also assisted the FANK in several other ways, for example, the defense of Phnom Penh against enemy shellings and sapper attacks. Such defense was deemed extremely important for Phnom Penh, as it was for Saigon, because beginning in September 1970, NVA artillery and sapper units became extensively active in the areas surrounding the Cambodian capital. For FANK officers responsible for the defense and

²The rumors were voiced in the Saigon newspapers, perhaps the doing of the Communists. Colonel Amos, who was Defense Attache in the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh at the time of the attack, has stated that no member of the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh ever heard such rumors or considered the attack to be other than the work of the VC/NVA, nor did the embassy ever hear any Khmer official describe the attack as anything but the work of the Communists.

protection of Phnom Penh to benefit from the RVNAF experience and techniques, they were authorized by the JGS to visit the RVN Capital Military Region's system of defense against shellings. At the same time, the VNN also conducted briefings for Khmer naval officers on security and protective measures against enemy naval sappers; and on naval escort tactics applicable to river convoys on the Mekong River. The JGS also initiated contingency plans for the relief of Phnom Penh in case of emergency. These plans were prepared by IV Corps Headquarters and included contingencies for the evacuation of RVN embassy and military liaison mission personnel from Phnom Penh. When they learned of these evacuation plans, the embassies of the Republics of China and Korea in Phnom Penh also asked for assistance in evacuation by the RVN military mission in case of emergency.

All of these examples of cooperation and coordination arrangements had been considered routine by the U.S. and the RVN for several years. To Cambodia, they were a novelty; they also caused serious difficulties for the FANK for the simple reason that this small and ill-equipped military force had very limited capabilities and was unable to confront enemy aggression alone. This was anticipated by the U.S. when it terminated combat operations in Cambodia. But the U.S. was handicapped by domestic political pressure and could not do as much to assist the FANK as it had the RVNAF. For example, the U.S. could not resume combat operations in Cambodia after the 30 June self-imposed deadline. Neither could it assign military advisers to FANK units. Because of its inability to provide this kind of support by itself, the U.S. encouraged the RVNAF to increase their assistance to the FANK in the key areas of combat operations, training, and logistics. This assistance came to be a real source of pride for the RVNAF servicemen, who had contributed their efforts and even sacrificed their lives for the benefit of their Khmer allies. But if because of this security assistance, Cambodia became free of enemy domination, then South Vietnam's security would also be greatly enhanced; perhaps this was a chance for an early settlement of the war.

The Tripartite Meetings

During the period of the Cambodian incursion, it was the RVNAF that played the most active role in cooperation and coordination with Khmer forces. Rarely, if ever, did the initiative for cooperation come from the Cambodian side. This reluctance or inertia could be attributed perhaps to the traditional suspicion and animosity that Cambodians had always felt toward their Vietnamese neighbors. In addition, at this time when diplomatic relations between the two countries had just been resumed there was a tendency for each to give its own point of view first priority vis-a-vis the other. To help dispel this animosity, the U.S. initiated monthly meetings among the participating nations, the RVN, the U.S. and Cambodia, which came to be known as Tripartite meetings. The first of these meetings took place in early July 1970, after the U.S. had terminated its combat activities in Cambodia. Each national delegation to the Tripartite meetings was led by a high-ranking military officer. The RVN delegation was usually led by Lt. General Nguyen Van Manh, Chief of Staff of the JGS. His Cambodian counterpart was Lt. General Sak Sutsakhan, Chief of Staff of the FANK. The U.S. was represented by the Deputy COMUSMACV. These meetings took place every month at MACV Headquarters, the JGS Headquarters, or the FANK General Staff Headquarters in Phnom Penh. The chiefs of delegations served as co-chairmen and took turns presiding over the meetings.

In addition to the Tripartite meetings, there was also an exchange of permanent military liaison missions between the RVNAF and the FANK under the control of the respective national delegations. The RVNAF military liaison mission was established in Phnom Penh and headed by Colonel To Van Kiem, Deputy Chief J-3, JGS, while the Cambodian counterpart mission in Saigon was headed by Brigadier General Pok Sam An, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, FANK General Staff. The Military elements of the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh provided U.S. military liaison to the FANK General Staff.

As a result of these meetings and the exchange of military liaison missions, cooperation and coordination improved greatly between

Cambodia and the RVN. Areas of interest that had thus far remained exclusive and one-sided, such as operational planning, intelligence, and logistic support, became common grounds for cooperation. In addition to the major common concern for the protection of the Mekong River and keeping Phnom Penh adequately supplied, there were two important areas of close cooperation and coordination between the JGS and the FANK General Staff: (1) combined activities of the RVN III Corps and the FANK 1st Military Region, and (2) combined activities of the RVN IV Corps and the FANK 2nd Military Region.

The U.S. initiative to institute tripartite meetings greatly contributed to the consolidation of cooperation and coordination between Cambodia and the RVN. It also helped dispel deep-rooted animosities and prejudices which had existed to some extent between the two nations but had been unfortunately amplified beyond imagination by a fanatical press. As a matter of fact, relations between the RVN and Cambodia were never better or so close as after the institution of tripartite meetings; they were always conducted in a most cooperative spirit and all problems of common interest were solved to the satisfaction of the parties concerned. This spirit of cooperation existed not only at the national level or the general staff level; it also pervaded lower tactical and administrative levels as well and every aspect of combined operations. Historically, this close cooperation was an unprecedented development between Vietnam and Cambodia.

RVN-U.S. Plans for Cambodia After 30 June 1970

While the Cambodian incursion was in full progress, Lt. General Michael S. Davison, U.S. Field Force II Commander and Lt. General Do Cao Tri, III Corps Commander jointly made plans for rainy season activities. Their ensuing directives were dissiminated to U.S. and ARVN units on or about 2 June 1970. According to these directives, III Corps forces were to continue operations in the zone along the Cambodian border, in order to prevent the enemy from resuming his activities and infiltrating

into South Vietnam. By 30 June, U.S. forces were to withdraw from Cambodia and operate in South Vietnam in the place of ARVN units committed across the border. In addition to these activities, U.S. artillery, tactical air, and possibly B-52's as well would be employed to interdict enemy infiltration. While ARVN units continued their operations in Cambodia, territorial and police forces, with the assistance and support of U.S. forces, were to maintain and consolidate security inside South Vietnam. This plan was subsequently revised on 20 September 1970 in keeping with the changing situation, since United States forces had already begun to redeploy from South Vietnam in increasing numbers.

The RVN-U.S. combined plan for the rainy season of 1970 was conceived with ambitious goals. It not only provided for the continuation of ARVN operations in Cambodia and the consolidation of security inside South Vietnam, but enabled the U.S. to continue withdrawing its forces as well. In terms of pacification and security, the plan placed emphasis on eliminating enemy local force units and infrastructure, driving them away from populous centers, destroying his remnant main force units, increasing the combat effectiveness of territorial forces, and pushing pacification and development efforts to success.

For the immediate future, at the onset of the approaching dry season, the RVNAF were to continue their activities in the Chup area (north of Krek) and west of Svay Rieng, along Route No. 1 from the border to Kompong Trabek. It was further planned that after Tet of 1971, the RVNAF would continue to conduct operations in the areas of Route No. 1 and Chup-Dambe. Security in South Vietnam would then improve to such a point as to be assumed primarily by territorial forces. This would allow the United States to continue the redeployment of its combat units.

One week after RVN and U.S. forces initiated combined operations in Cambodia, President Nixon announced that the RVNAF would probably withdraw from Cambodia at the same time as U.S. forces. This logic was based on the fact that if U.S. forces terminated combat activities in Cambodia, they would also remove all logistic and air support being

provided across the border. It was certainly true that RVNAF operations in Cambodia depended to a large extent on the U.S. support in helilift, airpower, and logistics. Consequently, if and when this support was withdrawn, the RVNAF would hardly be able to continue operations alone in Cambodia.

In the meantime, speaking for the RVN, Vice-President Nguyen Cao Ky declared to the foreign and domestic press during an interview on 1 June 1970 that "we have not determined when the RVNAF will withdraw from Cambodia. Cambodia and South Vietnam are like teeth and lips: if the lips are opened the teeth will get cold. On the other hand, we don't want to maintain our forces in Cambodia. Neither do we want to sit tight and watch North Vietnamese Communists use Cambodian territory freely as a staging area to launch attacks against South Vietnam as they have done for the past several years. The RVNAF have had their hands tied long enough. Now that they are enjoying freedom of action, we don't want to tie their hands again." Vice President Ky also emphasized that no outside pressure could take away the RVNAF freedom of action because they were acting for the sake of South Vietnam's security.

On 27 June 1970, President Nguyen Van Thieu announced on national TV several important decisions, namely: (1) the RVNAF would continue to operate on some Cambodian territory after the withdrawal of U.S. forces. The objective was to prevent NVA units from returning to the sanctuaries and bases that had just been destroyed; (2) the RVNAF would continue to evacuate from Cambodia those Vietnamese who desired to be repatriated; (3) the RVN was prepared to respond to the new Cambodian government's appeal for help against NVA aggression to the extent of its capabilities and when such a response was absolutely necessary; (4) future activities of the RVNAF would be initiated from South Vietnam and without the participation of U.S. advisers. All support required for these activities such as tactical air and logistics would be provided by the RVNAF; (5) the bulk of the RVNAF would be withdrawn from Cambodia; and (6) the main objective of South Vietnam

was to improve its own security and push Vietnamization toward success. All remaining activities on Cambodian soil served only to achieve this national GVN objective.

In addition during this same address, President Thieu confirmed and emphasized that the RVNAF would concentrate their efforts on improving domestic security. He reiterated that South Vietnam always respected Cambodia's territorial sovereignty, national borders, independence and neutrality and that it would never interfere in Cambodia's internal political problems. Finally, he asserted that the RVNAF neither wanted to maintain their units permanently in Cambodia nor did they ever volunteer to fight for the benefit of the Khmer Armed Forces. The GVN had only responded to a specific request from Khmer authorities to fight a common enemy.

In mid-1971, during monthly tripartite meetings, the Cambodian government asked for the abrogation of the RVNAF zone of operation in Cambodia. To strike a compromise, the RVN proposed that the zone be reduced in depth to 10-15 km. This was no longer important for the RVN because after U.S. forces terminated their operations in Cambodia on 30 June 1970, we did not have the capability to make deep incursions. What really concerned the RVN was the total abrogation of its right of access into this zone on Cambodian soil. The RVN was afraid that without free access to this zone, the RVNAF would run into difficulties whenever they were required to conduct operations in pursuit of the enemy. Then NVA forces would use this zone again as a staging area for attacks against South Vietnam, and when the RVNAF wanted to strike back, we would have to obtain Cambodian clearance, which would require considerable time. However, if the zone was maintained, the RVNAF could go in and out of Cambodia with ease.

CHAPTER VI

Cross-Border Operations After 30 June 1970

After 30 June 1970, and the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Cambodia, the RVNAF continued to conduct operations in Cambodia in accordance with the agreements already worked out between the RVN and the Cambodian Government. A zone 60 km deep inside Cambodia was established for these future cross-border operations. Within this zone, RVNAF forces could operate on the basis of FANK/RVNAF coordination, and without further government-to-government negotiation. These operations went on until the signing of the Paris peace accords in January 1973. In this chapter are discussed three significant operations which took place during the period July - December 1970.¹

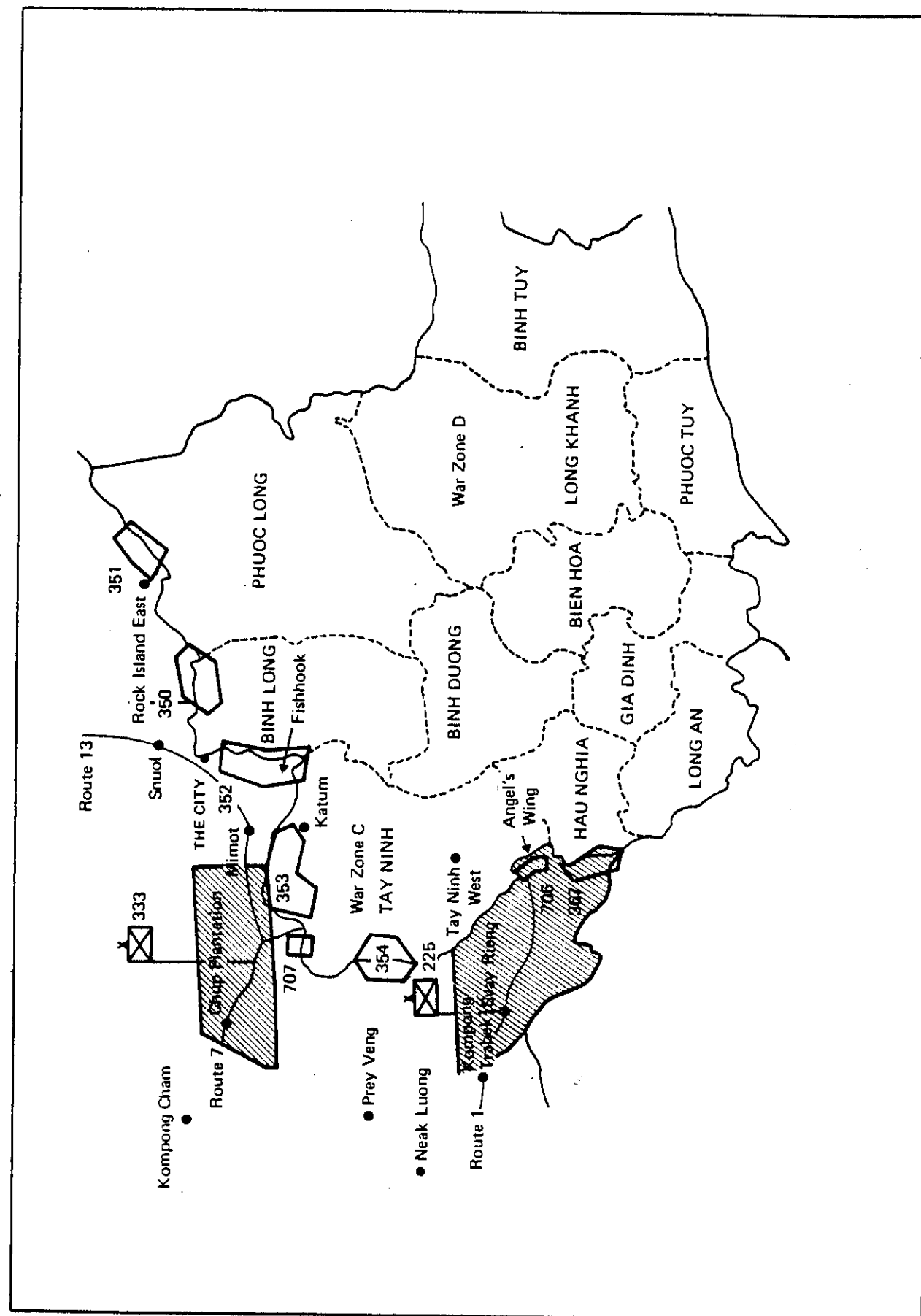
Toan Thang 42, Phase VI

Phase VI of Toan Thang 42 was conducted by III Corps forces along Route 7 and Route 1 in Cambodia. (Map 22) It had as its missions:

1. To prevent the enemy from returning to the base areas out of which he had been driven recently.
2. To interdict enemy movement into South Vietnam.

¹For descriptions of other cross-border operations in Cambodia by RVNAF units, see Sak Sutsakhan, The Khmer Republic at War and the Final Collapse, and Ngo Quang Truong, The Easter Offensive of 1972, both in this series.

Map 22 - Area of Operations for TOAN THANG 42, Phase VI



The results from TOAN THANG 42, Phase VI were very limited for the following reasons:

1. The rainy season inhibited movement.
2. The enemy had to reorganize and resupply himself.
3. The RVNAF no longer had the combat support of U.S. units, as had been the case prior to 30 June.
4. III Corps units, and all of the RVNAF were preparing for the coming dry season of 1970-71.

CUU LONG 44

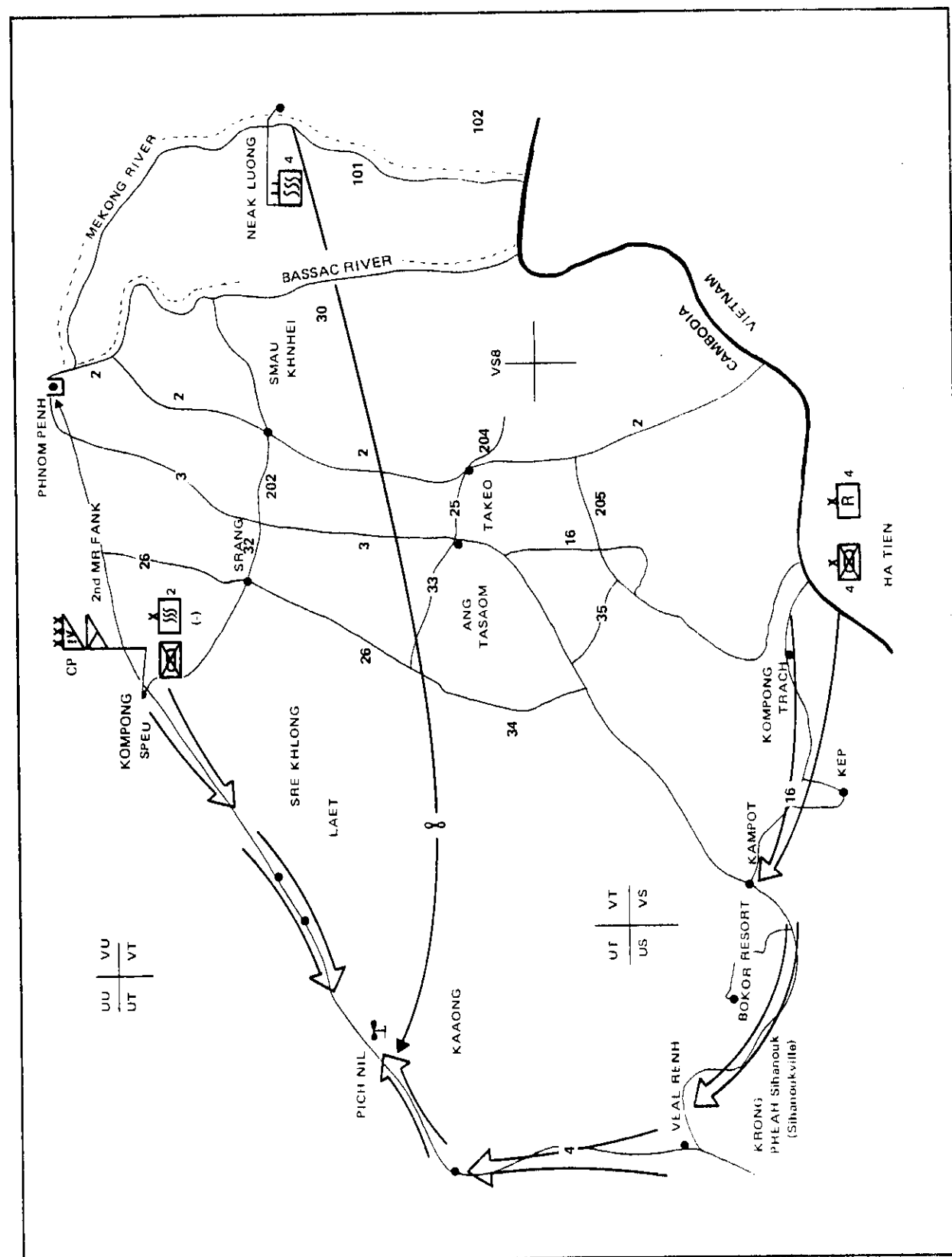
CUU LONG 44 was conducted in order to assist the FANK in reopening and re-establishing security along Route 4. In September 1970, enemy forces, including units of the 1st NVA Division, had closed this LOC by occupying the Pich Nil Pass. Several FANK outposts on Route 4 had been overrun in the process and other posts had been evacuated without resistance. Although the Mekong River was open, Route 4 was very important to the FANK and to the Cambodian Government for all types of supplies, but particularly for military equipment. When the FANK requested help on Route 4, the JGS assigned the mission to the Commander IV Corps. (Map 23)

Forces for CUU LONG 44 consisted of the 4th Armor Brigade and 4th Ranger Group from IV Corps. In addition, the JGS reinforced the operation with the 2nd Marine Brigade. These forces were organized for combat into two task forces. Task Force North consisted of the 2nd Marine Brigade (-) and the 12th Armor Regiment. It moved by vehicle, along Route 1 to Phnom Penh, and by Route 4 to Kompong Speu. Task Force South consisted of the 4th Armor Brigade (-) and the 4th Ranger Group. It departed Ha Tien on Route 16, and was to continue west to Route 4, then north to link up with Task Force North.

Command arrangements were as follows:

1. Task Force North was commanded by the Commander of the 2nd Marine Brigade.
2. Task Force South was commanded by Colonel Hoang Huu Gia, Commander, 4th Armor Brigade.

Map 23 -- Area of Operations for CUU LONG 44



3. The overall operation was under the command of Colonel Vo Huu Hanh, Commander 44th Special Zone, who established his C.P. at Kompong Speu.

4. In addition to the above, the IV Corps Commander assigned his Special Assistant for Pacification, Brigadier General Nguyen Duy Hinh, to supervise all RVNAF forces and to take charge of coordination with FANK forces. Brigadier General Hinh collocated his CP with that of the Commander Khmer MR-2 at Kompong Speu.

In the north, it was a combined RVNAF/FANK operation, with the Vietnamese forces taking the lead and operating south along Route 4 toward Pich Nil Pass. Units were normally not more than one km off the road while moving south. However, the most significant action concerned the force advancing from the south toward Pich Nil Pass. Here two ARVN M-113s were destroyed by enemy fire. In order to regain the initiative, the IV Corps Commander, Major General Ngo Quang Truong ordered the move, by helicopter, of the 4th Marine Corps Battalion from Neak Luong to the area of difficulty south of Pich Nil.² With this reinforcement, the task force advancing from the south was able to move through Pich Nil Pass and link up with RVNAF and FANK forces north of the pass.

Air support was the responsibility of the VNAF 4th Air Division at Can Tho, whose assets were supplemented by U.S. air units, reconnaissance, tactical, and B-52. In addition, the U.S. DMAC Commander, Major General Cushman, arranged for the forward basing of U.S. fire support and medical evacuation helicopters at An Thoi on Phu Quoc Island, from where they were in a better position to support the forces operating in the south.

At the conclusion of the ten-day operation, all RVNAF units returned to Vietnam by secondary roads in order to help reestablish FANK security in the central portions of Routes 2 and 3.

²Major General Truong replaced Major General General Dzu as Commander IV Corps in October 1970.

In December 1970, following a series of attacks against FANK units located along routes 6 and 7 west and northwest of Kompong Cham, the enemy cut Route 7 and isolated Kompong Cham from Phnom Penh. At the request of the Cambodian Government (passed to Saigon via the RVN Embassy in Phnom Penh), President Thieu ordered the JGS to relieve Kompong Cham once more. This would be its third relief by RVNAF. The JGS passed the mission to the III Corps Commander and reinforced him with the Airborne Division from the ARVN General Reserve.³ In addition, III Corps was given first priority on the use of all RVNAF helicopter assets.

(Map 24)

The 2d Airborne Brigade was helilifted from Tay Ninh to the airfield just west of Kompong Cham. It was accompanied by the light CP of the Airborne Division. From this CP, established at the airfield, Colonel Nguyen Trung Hau, Deputy Division Commander, coordinated ARVN activities west of the Mekong and the advance of the task force moving along Route 7 toward Kompong Cham. All ARVN activities were coordinated with FANK as well.

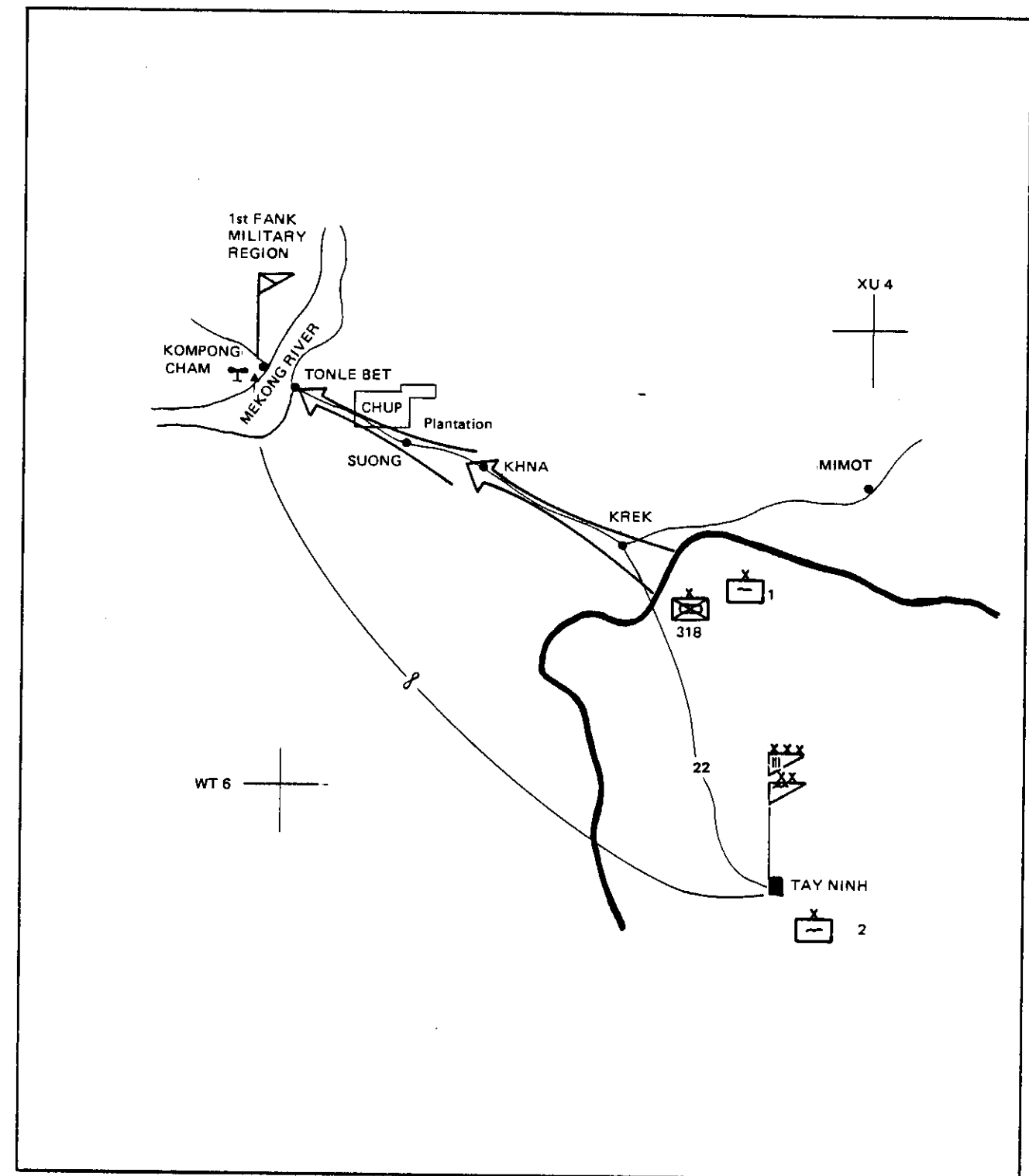
RVNAF forces received the same U.S. air support in this operation as in CUU LONG 44.

There was no significant contact with enemy main force units. Enemy reaction was limited to attacks by fire west of the Mekong and mining and harassment along Route 7 in the Chup area. After one week, ARVN forces withdrew to South Vietnam, by air and along Route 7.

Although this operation did little damage to the enemy, it ended a very real threat to Kompong Cham and was a great encouragement to the FANK. It also demonstrated that the ARVN could mount operations west of the Mekong on very short notice.

³Dai Bang (Eagle) was incorporated into the name of the operation in view of the participation of the Airborne Division.

Map 24 -- Area of Operations for TOAN THANG 42/ DAI BANG



CHAPTER VII

Khmer Participation

Background

Cambodia's participation - or to put it more accurately its being dragged into the Indochinese conflict - dated rather far back in the political history of Cambodia. The dominant personality of this entire period was unquestionably Prince Norodom Sihanouk who, first as reigning King, and then as Chief of State, held nearly absolute power for more than 30 years in this tiny kingdom which shares over one half of its national boundaries with South Vietnam.

Following the Geneva Accords of 1954, Cambodia adopted a policy of strict neutrality and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. It was a policy that Cambodia maintained until 1962. During the first years of experimenting with neutrality, the fact should be admitted that Cambodia was having numerous and quite serious difficulties with its immediate neighbors, Thailand to the west and South Vietnam to the east. These difficulties stemmed from border disputes that Prince Sihanouk described as "annexationist design" on the part of our neighbors. Of these many disputes, the affair of Preah Vihear was the best known because the drawn-out legal battle for it was terminated only by a formal decision of the International Court of Justice at the Hague.¹ Relations with the Republic of Vietnam had also known some bad moments, caused by many border incidents, themselves the result of pursuit operations carried out by the RVNAF against the VC and NVA.

¹Prea Vihear is an ancient Khmer Temple located on the Cambodian-Thai border, almost directly north of Phnom Penh. For a number of years, there was a dispute between the two governments as to whether the temple was, in fact, in Cambodia or Thailand. Submitted to the International Court of Justice, the Court ruled in favor of Cambodia in early 1962. Dean Acheson represented Cambodia.

It should be noted that with each of these incidents, whether on the Thai or RVN border, the Royal Cambodian Government directed representations and protests not only to the government concerned, but, at the same time to the United States. This latter was done because Cambodia considered that the U.S. could exercise its political influence on Thailand and the RVN to halt the border incidents. Only nothing ever came of the Cambodian protests, and these border incidents, by then become more and more frequent, constituted one of the causes for the change in policy adopted by Prince Sihanouk during the years preceeding the entry of Cambodia into the Indochina conflict.

Encouraged by the visit to Phnom Penh of Prime Minister Nehru in 1954, and by the conference of Ban Dung in April 1955, where he met Chou En Lai, Prince Sihanouk saw, from the Cambodian point of view, indisputable advantages in a policy of strict neutrality, and, in order to demonstrate the authenticity of the newly achieved Cambodian independence, a policy dictated by neither France nor the United States, Sihanouk denounced the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

But Cambodia's immediate neighbors, Thailand and South Vietnam, saw differently; they considered Cambodia's neutrality an open invitation for Communist penetration. And thus began the cold war between Cambodia and its two neighbors.

During the 1962 Geneva Conference on Laos, Prince Sihanouk recommended a neutralized zone made up of Cambodia and Laos. The outcome of this conference left him disappointed, however, because not only was his idea rejected, he also saw Laos partitioned. The prospect of Cambodia turning into another Laos in the future deeply worried him and led him to adopt a new policy line which sought to strike a certain balance between the east and the west in Cambodia.

During this same period, the situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate. And when the military coup against Ngo Dinh Diem's regime occurred in November 1963 during which the South Vietnamese president was killed, Prince Sihanouk was faced with a political dilemma of having to choose between two alternatives: Communism or the Free World. He found neither sufficiently reassuring for his regime and Cambodia's future.

Sihanouk had been led to believe in the growing danger of U.S. aid from his visit to Peking in early 1963 during which the Chinese expressed their concerns about the increasing American presence in Cambodia on the one hand and the presence of CIA-supported Khmer Serei troops on the other. As a result, at the conclusion of the Special National Congress which he convened on 19 November 1963, Sihanouk renounced U.S. aid altogether, apparently to avoid American interference in Khmer domestic affairs.

Two days later, Prince Sihanouk unsuccessfully tried to initiate a limited international conference — with the participation of the U.S., South Vietnam and all countries directly involved in Cambodia's security — designed to guarantee Cambodia's sovereignty within its current national boundaries. His attempt was dictated by the uncertainty of South Vietnam's future and the more disquieting foreign aid that Vietnamese Communists were receiving.

In his reasoning, Prince Sihanouk had said in effect:

Quite frankly, it is not in our interests to deal with the West, which represents the present but not the future. In 10 years time, there will probably be in Thailand, which always responds to the dominant wind, a pro-Chinese neutralist government, and South Vietnam will certainly be governed by Ho Chi Minh or his successor. Our interests are served by dealing with the camp that one day will dominate the whole of Asia — and by coming to terms before its victory — in order to obtain the best terms possible.²

Despite the fact that Prince Sihanouk saw his real enemies to be the Communists, his change of policy, and especially his derogatory remarks about the U.S. exasperated the U.S. government to the point that one day Secretary Dean Rusk reportedly summoned the Cambodian ambassador to his office and told him, "Mr. Ambassador, you've got to remember that small countries are not the only ones capable of outrage. Big countries can get mad too."

²Leifer, Michael, Cambodia, The Search for Security, New York, F. A. Praeger, 1967.

Since the U.S. had not supported a conference such as the one suggested by Sihanouk, the prince, it was reported, authorized a popular demonstration in March 1964 during which the U.S. and British embassies in Phnom Penh were seriously damaged.

During his visit to Peking in September 1964, Sihanouk met with Pham Van Dong, North Vietnam's prime minister, and asked him to recognize Cambodia's territorial integrity. Dodging the issue, Dong in his turn asked Sihanouk to refer to the National Liberation Front (NLF) which could represent South Vietnam in this matter.

In December 1964, American and Cambodian officials met in New Delhi, through the good offices of the Indian government. Although very cordial, this encounter failed to improve the already tense relations between Cambodia and the U.S.

In early 1965, Great Britain and the U.S. finally decided on an international conference to guarantee Cambodia's national boundaries, in an apparent effort to slow Cambodia's slide toward Communism. Unfortunately, this was too late because Sihanouk, who was now firmly on Peking's side, insisted that the NLF represent South Vietnam in this conference. Obviously, this was unacceptable to the western powers. And so, a further step had been taken, and on 3 May 1965, Sihanouk severed diplomatic relations with Washington.³

In this period of Sihanouk's very active political maneuvering, during which he sought to keep in line with current international trends, in order to ultimately align Cambodia on the Communist side, several military events occurred in this part of South East Asia, particularly in South Vietnam, which seemed to justify Sihanouk's attitude if a parallel is drawn between them and the actions he had taken.

By that time, the very famous Ho Chi Minh Trail, which crossed the 18th parallel had already been well established along the entire length

³Sihanouk had broken relations with Thailand in October 1961 and the Republic of Vietnam in August 1963.

of Laos. The rights of the Pathet Lao in this country had been recognized since the 1962 Geneva Conference. In South Vietnam, the VC/NVA presence, which had caused serious turmoil, barely kept under control by the government, continued to increase and expand its influence in most provinces. The enemy's spectacular show of force and capabilities during the Tet offensive of February 1968 in Saigon City itself, was, to the Khmer, proof that he already had the very heart of this country under siege. All of these events tended to confirm Sihanouk's thesis as to South Vietnam's fate in the first place and by way of Cambodia, that of the Indochinese peninsula in general.

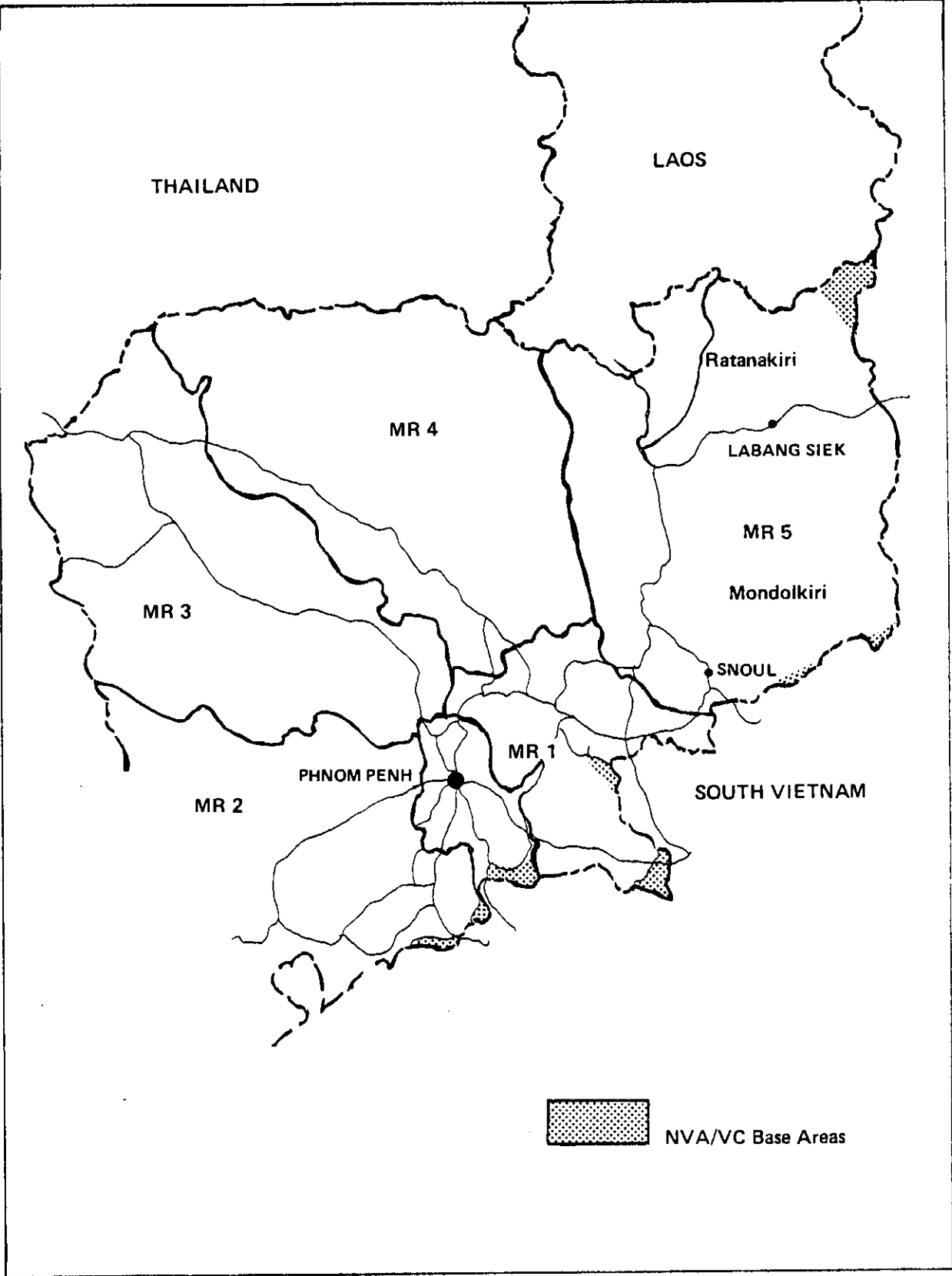
One might say, therefore, that this increasingly worsening military situation in favor of the enemy, coupled with difficulties, and misunderstandings between Phnom Penh and the Western powers, edged Sihanouk further into the adversary's camp in a decisive manner. During this same period, the Communist devoted all of their efforts to winning the esteem and trust of this prince who, it was well understood, was far from desiring a fate such as President Ngo Dinh Diem's.

Communist Use of Cambodian Territory

As a matter of fact, Communist forces began, as early as 1962, to infiltrate into the northern and eastern border areas of Cambodia, particularly in Stung Treng, Ratanakiri, Kratie, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng, Takeo and Kampot. By 1969, these infiltrated forces were estimated at 50,000 men installed in "sanctuaries" whose importance varied from a simple transit center to all types of bases, having complete military, logistic, and rest facilities, such as the bases in Ratanakiri, Mondolkiri, and Snoul. (Map 25)

Because of his "double game," Prince Sihanouk simply omitted, in all of his public statements, references to the existence of these infiltrations, and most particularly, the sanctuaries. He did this apparently to cover up his complicity with North Vietnam and the Viet Cong

Map 25 -- Cambodian Government Information on Locations of Principal NVA/VC Base Areas in Cambodia in 1969



on the one hand, and to reject the pretexts of "enemy pursuit" by U.S. and South Vietnam forces on the other.

At the same time, however, Sihanouk saw a real Communist danger in his own back yard because, while trying to remain on good terms with China and the NLF, he also decreed a merciless hunt for Khmer Communists. In January 1962, for example, Nong Suon, a Vietnamese-trained Khmer Communist leader, was arrested along with 13 other members of his gang. All were tried by a military tribunal, and imprisoned.

In early 1969, however, the NVA/VC troops, by then solidly installed in their sanctuaries, began to exert pressure on the civilian population around them, while conducting subversive activities against the Cambodian government. Skirmishes with local Khmer authorities became increasingly serious and bloody, such as the armed rebellion of Khmer-Loeu (Montagnards) in the Ratanakiri and Mondolkiri area which resulted in the nearly total loss of local Cambodian control over this ethnic group, many among whom later joined the NVA/VC forces, either of their own will or under coercion.

It was this rebellion that induced Sihanouk to admit for the first time in public the threat posed by Communists. In a political speech he delivered at the inauguration of the 27th National Congress, Sihanouk denounced this threat in these terms: "As to infiltrations, control and incitement of a segment of our fellow-countrymen, which are the doing of certain Communist neighbors, as well as the armed rebellion by the traitorous Khmer Communists (in the Pailin region of Battambang Province) they will inevitably result, if they do not stop and recede, in the loss of our independence and neutrality."

By mentioning the loss of neutrality in this statement, perhaps Sihanouk wanted to imply that he would be capable of seeking assistance from a foreign power to counter the Communist intrusion. Diplomatic relations with the U.S. were resumed on 3 June 1969; it was, perhaps, the U.S. that Sihanouk was trying to put into his balance of foreign relations, which had already tilted a little too heavily in favor of the East. Although it fell on deaf ears, this famous declaration could be regarded as a warning intended for the FNL and their protectors.

The incorporation of Cambodia into the Communist supply system kept pace with the development of the flow of VC/NVA infiltration into Cambodia, and the development of political relations between Cambodia and the Provisional Revolutionary (Viet Cong) Government (PRG).

From the Communist view point, the Ho Chi Minh Trail constituted in fact the only strategic route leading south. Under constant surveillance and continuous bombings by the USAF and VNAF, this route did not lend itself easily to the transportation of the heavy equipment and materiel which were required for NVA troops in the south. If this route were completely interdicted by U.S. and RVN forces, it would be a real disaster for North Vietnam and the Viet Cong. Therefore, it was mandatory for the enemy to find an alternate to this vital lifeline, which would be less vulnerable to USAF/VNAF bombings. This explained why he turned toward Cambodia, or more particularly, toward its seaport of Kompong Som. It was a most propitious time for the enemy's diplomatic maneuvers. Since Sihanouk had repudiated U.S. aid, Communist countries, and especially Red China were rushing in to fill this void. It became just a matter of increasing the volume of aid shipments to Cambodia, then routing the surplus to NVA/VC forces; the process passed almost undetected. This alternate route was deemed even more reliable because it was not exposed to the risks of U.S. bombings.

In the meantime, Sihanouk seemed to have serious doubts about the viability of Cambodia and his regime. On the one hand he was harassed by unending border violations, the result of the pursuit of Communist forces from South Vietnam into Cambodia; on the other hand, he was worried by the subversive maneuvers of the NVA/VC and the local Khmer Communists. He launched therefore "an appeal for the recognition and respect of Cambodia's territorial integrity within its present boundaries."

To this appeal, only Nguyen Huu Tho, president of the NLF, and Pham Van Dong, North Vietnam's prime minister responded favorably by their letters of 6 and 8 June 1967 respectively. The U.S. took nearly two years to respond, until 15 April 1969. All this resulted in a further consolidation of relations between Cambodia and the enemy which prompted

Sihanouk on 13 June 1969 to extend formal recognition to the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of South Vietnam, created just 12 days earlier.

The first formal cooperation agreement between Cambodia and the PRG was concluded soon after Nguyen Tan Phat, PRG prime minister, paid a 6-day official visit to Phnom Penh on 29 June 1969. Designated "Trade and Payment Agreement", it was signed in Phnom Penh on 25 September 1969. Thus were formalized the illegal activities that Prince Sihanouk had already authorized for several years. The seaport of Kompong Som was now wide open to receive shipments of supplies intended for NVA/VC troops.

These supplies were subsequently moved by truck to their destinations via Route No. 4. Unloading and transportation operations were the exclusive activities of a certain Hak Ly who owned about 200 cargo trucks. From Kompong Som to Kompong Speu or Phnom Penh, the cargos were carried on trucks rented by Hak Ly. Then from these places to final destination, the transportation was provided by Hak Ly's own trucks, which usually unloaded at Snoul and Mimot.

To rid himself of troublesome witnesses, Sihanouk ordered a black-listing of undesirable foreign correspondents, especially those of the Free World. Finally, citing financial difficulties and criticizing its inactivity, Sihanouk terminated the mandate of the International Control Commission (ICC) on 6 October 1969. On his official request, all members of this international organization left Cambodia by the end of the year.

Thus it was accomplished that the Communists, by painstaking preparation, took advantage of the political uncertainties in that part of the world, and of the dilemma of Sihanouk.

What was the attitude of the Cambodian people toward this political change by Sihanouk? Generally speaking, there were two contrasting schools of thought: the corrupt who were partisan and enthusiastic; and the uncorrupt, who were disquieted.

The first category consisted of courtiers and businessmen to whom this new kind of business had brought substantial and significant profits.

The second category was mostly made up of intellectuals who found this new game risky. While the dissidents did not wholly approve of Sihanouk, with regard to his cooperation with North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, their manifestations were not vocal either, and one might think that they were indifferent. But on examination it could be seen that their silence was justified by the facts described below.

In the first place, Cambodia was the least endowed country in terms of materiel assets and particularly military equipment as compared to its eastern or western neighbors. This was perhaps a result of its desire to stay away from either sphere of influence. Because of its neutral stance, Cambodia did not have much attraction for rich and powerful countries, especially since its only resources came from agricultural products. Elsewhere in the world, industrial powers seemed always attracted by countries with rich underground resources. Cambodia, therefore, had been forsaken for a long time; it was almost completely ignored.

Although Cambodia had received some foreign aid from certain friendly countries of the West since 1954, this aid was only dispensed at a trickling rate after lengthy and complicated procedures. With the exception of rubber production, a French concession which was rather obsolescent, industry was non-existent, being at the level of handicraft and cottage enterprise.

From his relations with the Communists, Sihanouk was therefore able to obtain at least something with which to equip his country, such as the Khmer-Russian Hospital, the Institute of Technology, cement, paper, glass and plywood production plants and some military equipment as well. With regard to military aid, Cambodia usually received a quota which was allotted in each cargo shipment unloaded at Kompong Som.

All this largely explained the passivity and silence of dissident intellectuals.

The Royal Khmer Armed Forces

Prior to March 1970, the Royal Khmer Armed Forces (Forces Armees Royales Khmeres - FARK) were just a small military organization whose strength

did not even reach the authorized ceiling of 35,000 men; they were distributed among three services; the Royal Khmer Army, the Royal Khmer Air Force and the Royal Khmer Navy, all under the command of a Commander-in-Chief.⁴

The following review shows that at that time, the FARK were insignificant as compared to NVA and VC forces, and there were several reasons for this.

Prior to the Geneva Accords of 1954, it was a fact that Cambodia received military aid from France. During that period, therefore, the FARK were equipped with French materiel. The French also provided training for all FARK cadres, most of whom were even sent to France for advanced courses. In addition, under the guidance of French advisers, the FARK were structurally similar to a miniature French Army. France, which at that time had just emerged from the First Indochina war, did not have enough resources to make the FARK a strong and modern military force. This French policy was also partly justified by the fact that according to the 1954 Geneva Accords, Cambodia was not supposed to make war. The FARK were thus organized and equipped somewhat in a pre-WWII style, a condition which obtained as late as 1954.

Then came the U.S. and its more diversified aid, which included military assistance. The FARK were now subjected to transformation because, with new American equipment, the Command attempted to change the organization of the armed forces. Unfortunately, the quantity of equipment provided by the U.S. was not enough to allow the modernization of the RKAF. And when Sihanouk renounced to U.S. aid together in November 1963, the RKAF found themselves midway toward modernization. It was then that there surfaced the first difficulties resulting from the disparity of equipment and material in use — French and American.

⁴The two acronyms used in this monograph to designate the Cambodian armed forces are based on both Cambodian usage and U.S. reporting practices. FARK stands for Forces Armées Royales Khmères, the official French name for Khmer forces during the Sihanouk period. FANK stands for Forces Armées Nationales Khmères, the official French name used by the Cambodians after 18 March 1970. It was standard U.S. reporting procedure, both before and after the departure of Sihanouk, to use FARK or FANK; no acronym based on an English translation (as in the case of RVNAF for Vietnamese forces) was ever developed to refer to the entire armed forces of Cambodia.

After the rupture of relations with the U.S., the only countries that gave Cambodia military assistance were France (which continued to dispense it at a trickle) and, especially, those of the Communist Bloc, first the Soviet Union and then China. The net result of this new assistance was a further aggravation of the existing difficulties, for the FARK now had to contend with three different types of materiel and equipment: French, American and Communist. It goes without saying that the FARK encountered no end of problems. The divergence of its materiel, affected the training of combat and technical personnel, maintenance and especially the supply of spare parts and ammunition.

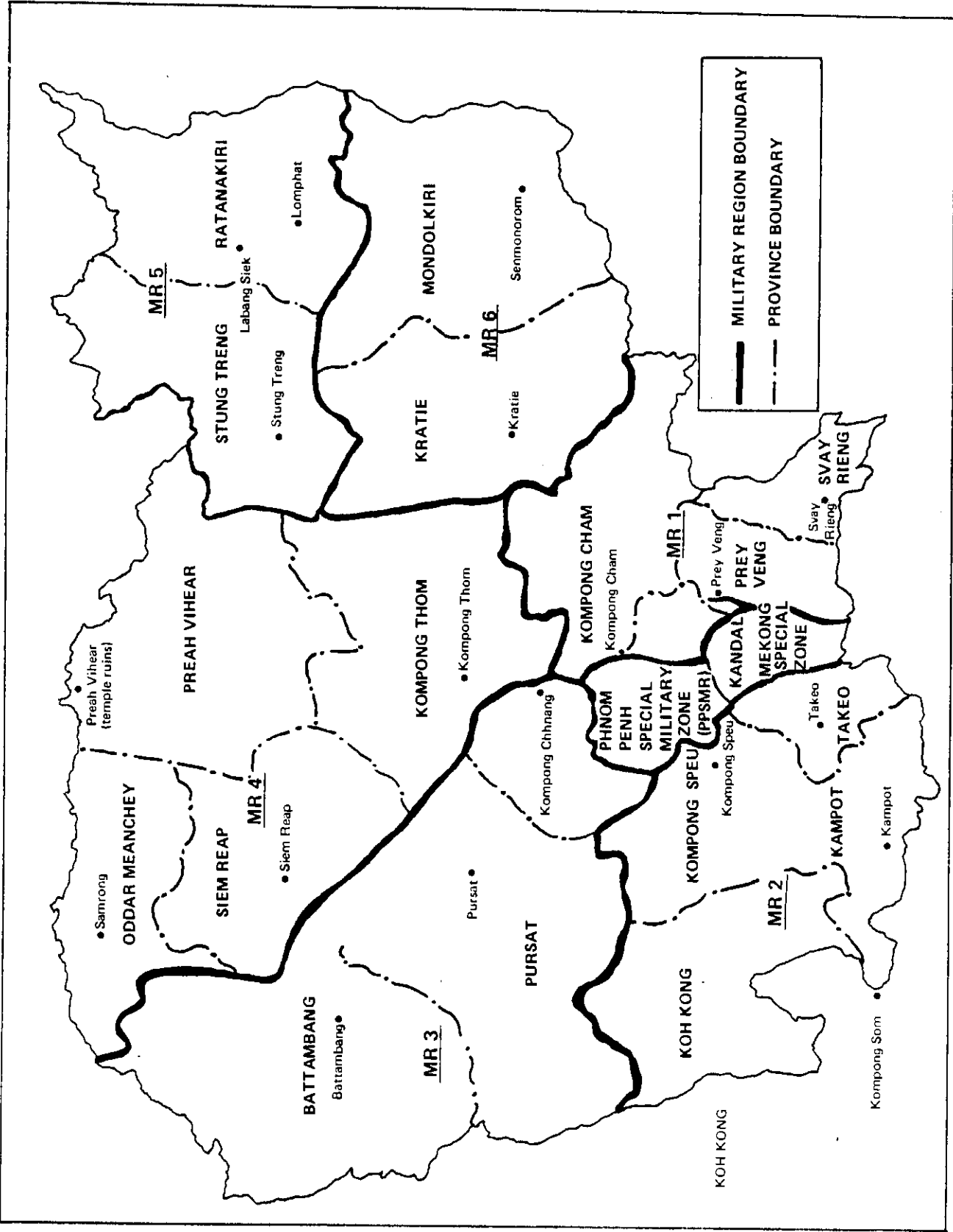
All this explained why the FARK were never able to achieve the standardization of their units in order to become a strong and modern military force. Consequently, the primary mission of the FARK remained just "territorial, — hence static — defense." The Royal Khmer Army, which was the largest of the three services in terms of personnel and materiels, was thus assigned this responsibility.

Army units were deployed over six military regions (MR), each of them encompassing from two to five military subdivisions whose limits were essentially the territorial boundaries of provinces: (Map 26)

	Headquarters located in:	Provinces Making up Military Region
1st MR:	Kompong Cham	Kompong Cham, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng and Kandal
2d MR:	Kompong Speu	Kompong Speu, Kampot, Takeo, Kompong Som and Koh Kong
3d MR:	Battambang	Battambang, Kompong Chhnang, Pursat
4th MR:	Siem Reap	Siem Reap, Kompong Thom, Oddar Meanchay, Preah Vihear
5th MR:	Stung Treng	Stung Treng, Ratanakiri
6th MR:	Kratie	(created in 1969) Kratie, Mondolkiri

In general, the MR commander commanded the infantry battalions and combat support companies deployed in his MR. As to technical service

Map 26 -- The Military Regions of the Khmer Armed Forces in 1971



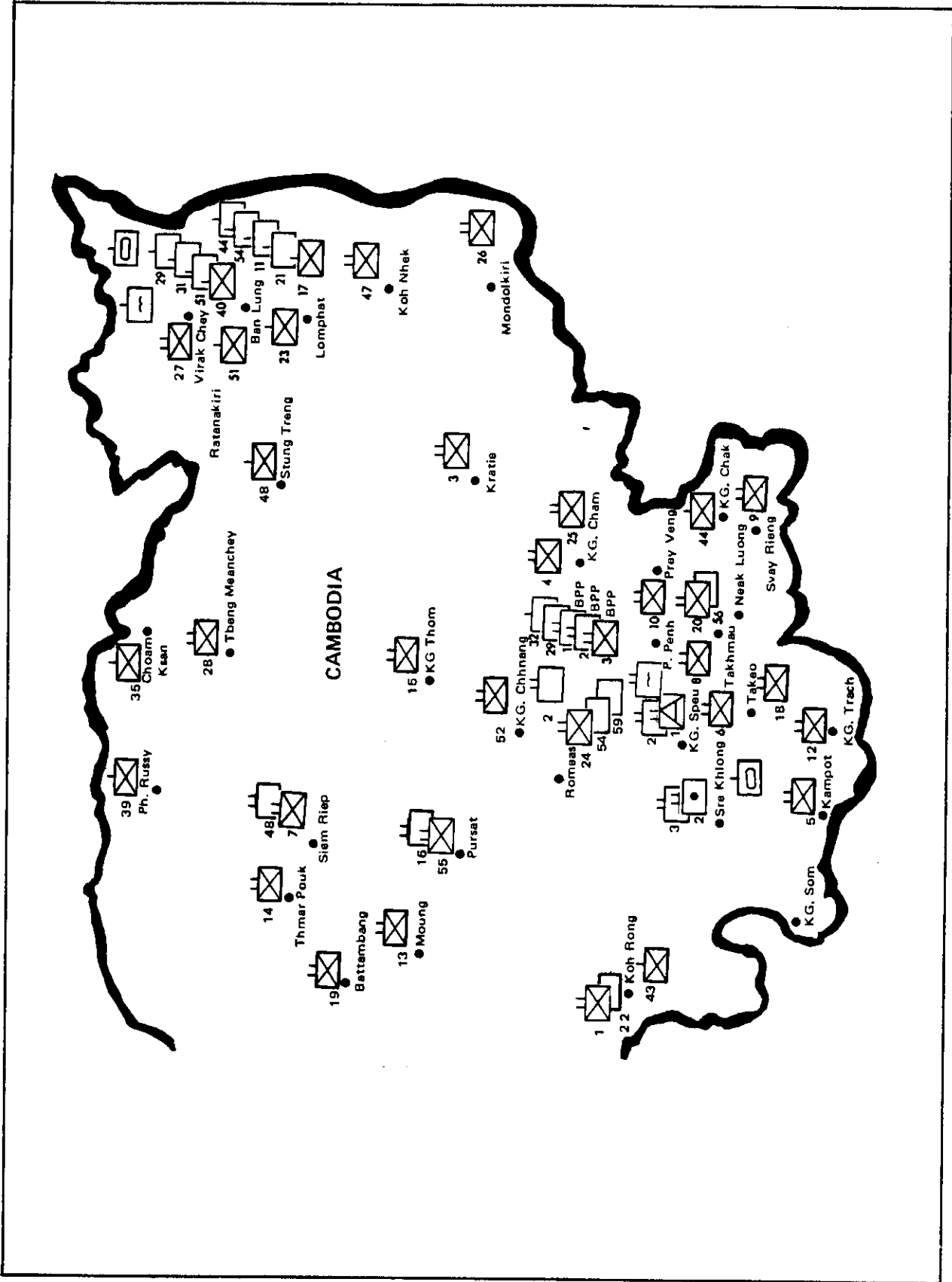
detachments, which were under the control of their parent Service Directorates, they were subordinate to the Military Region commander for operational control only. In addition to the FARK units and service detachments, the MR commander could in case of need also employ Royal Police forces which were subordinate to the local province governor. There was also a special zone around the capital having the status of a military region, and shortly after the start of the war a special defense zone for the Mekong River between the capital and the RVN border was established.

In early 1970, a majority of the approximately 35 battalions of ground forces were concentrated in the northeast and around the capital. (Map 27) General reserve forces consisted only of two light infantry battalions, and the combat support battalions (Signal, Engineer, Armor, Artillery).

The Royal Air Force had a strength of 1,250 men, composed in great majority of flight crews (pilots, flight engineers, radio operators and flight mechanics) and aviation technicians. Its only airbase at Pochentong was placed under the control of the Commander-in Chief. Because of its low strength and limited flying assets, the Air Force was far from being able to accomplish its primary mission which was to defend the national airspace. Although there were several airstrips other than Pochentong, they were only used temporarily as emergency landing strips and never as secondary airbases. Therefore, the Air Force was merely considered a combat support arm which provided air transport services to infantry units and occasionally close air support to combat operations.

The Royal Khmer Navy, whose strength was similar to that of the Air Force, had a river base at Chruai Changwar (Phnom Penh) and a naval base at Ream. As was the case with the Air Force, the Navy did not have very great capability. There was one marine company in the Navy. Most naval activity was confined to the Bassac River, the Mekong, and the Tonle Sap in the vicinity of the Great Lake. As far as naval missions on the high sea were concerned, the Navy was capable only of routine coastal patrols.

Map 27 -- Locations of Principal FARK Ground Units Prior to 18 March 1970



Throughout its years of independence since 1953 the Royal Khmer Armed Forces were never organized and were never trained for the purpose of aggression; they were only designed to defend the national territory. Perhaps, because of this reason, furthermore aggravated by a lack of concern or even neglect, the FARK were not prepared for war on 18 March 1970.

As a result, the majority of officers and non-commissioned officers, who for several years had helplessly witnessed the NVA/VC invasion of Cambodian territory, displayed rather low morale because they already perceived the imminent danger of the enemy threat. This low morale was all the more marked due to the fact that all FARK personnel were volunteers; all were concerned for the country's survival.

Professionally, as has been said, the FARK were very ill-prepared for the war. The main reasons for this unpreparedness were more political than technical.

First, the FARK had been activated with the material and technical assistance of the French government, on which they depended almost entirely from the beginning. With the advent of U.S. assistance, they underwent a first transformation, and when this assistance was refused, a second transformation. Each transformation naturally required the training of personnel but the time in-between was too short for training to progress to an advanced level. The end result of these transformations was that the FARK suffered from a lack of cohesiveness within their ranks, a legacy of widely diverging military systems (French, American, and Russian-Chinese).

Second, perhaps because of a lack of funds or more likely, because of an overconfidence in the 1954 Geneva Accords, no significant effort had been expended to train either officers or soldiers. By overconfidence in the 1954 Geneva Accords, I refer to the reliance which Cambodia, because of her small size, always placed on international bodies and international opinion in order to maintain her security. The 1954 accords were a great diplomatic victory for Cambodia, and gave rise to high optimism on our part; in retrospect, this optimism was unfounded. For the entire

Army, there were only four training facilities: the Khmer Military Academy for officers, a training center at Pursat for non-commissioned officers; another one at Romeas for enlisted men above the rank of private; and, an armor training center for officers and non-commissioned officers at Kompong Chhnang.

Third, in addition to all these difficulties and at a time when the FARK should have been worrying about its lack of personnel and training (in order to prepare for an enemy already in place) Sihanouk made an even greater error by converting the FARK from an Army to a public works organization. During that time, Cambodian soldiers learned how to handle shovels and axes instead of weapons.

Finally, because Cambodia had enjoyed relative peace since 1954 on the one hand and because of the small size of its armed forces on the other, all FARK units were assigned to essentially static defense missions.

As for equipment and materiel, they were war-worn and obsolescent, being all of World War II vintage and left by French forces when they were withdrawn from Cambodia. Only the Royal Khmer Air Force had the benefit of relatively modern equipment. But even this failed to make it a modern air force, capable of carrying out its true mission. With the exception of the MIG-17F, a gift from Soviet Russia and the People's Republic of China (1961), all aircraft belonging to the Air Force were designed solely for training and short transport, this despite the fact that Cambodian flight crews, being trained overseas, were all qualified for more modern aircraft. As to the Khmer Navy, it did not fare any better than its sister services. Equipped with small boats and ships all lightly armed, the Navy did not even dare to leave the confines of coastal waters and take to the high seas.

In conclusion, it was clear that on 18 March 1970, the FARK were distinctly below acceptable levels for a modern military force. Their equipment was not only obsolescent but also hideously disparate, coming chiefly from the surplus of others. In a certain sense, the FARK depots were not unlike junk yards where everyone had conveniently dumped whatever he found of no further use.

Attacks by NVA/VC Forces Against Cambodia After 18 March 1970

Sihanouk was stripped of his powers as Chief of State on 18 March 1970. It was a legal action decided unanimously by members of both legislative chambers, who, in fact, had been pushed toward this action by the increasing threat posed by NVA/VC forces in Cambodia.

An unsuccessful attempt to deal with the NVA/VC had been made on 24 May 1969 when Prime Minister Lon Nol met officially for the first time with North Vietnam's representative, Nguyen Thuong, and the NLF delegate, Nguyen Van Hieu. The purpose of this meeting was to request the NVA/VC to desist from committing violations against Cambodian territory, violations which were frequent and becoming more and more serious. No positive result was obtained from this meeting; the enemy simply ignored Cambodia's request.

Since NVA/VC forces continued to exert pressure on the local Khmer population, the inhabitants of Svay Rieng began in early March 1970 to manifest their dissatisfaction toward the intruders. These popular manifestations met with retaliations from the enemy and resulted in casualties. This in turn provoked a widespread feeling of discontent among the population which culminated in destructive rampages against the North Vietnamese and PRG embassies in Phnom Penh on 11 and 12 March 1970.

Amidst the gravity of this explosive situation, which pitted the Khmer population against the NVA/VC, the Cambodian government, by a diplomatic note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, formally requested the NVA/VC to withdraw all of their troops from Cambodian territory. The deadline set was dusk 15 March 1970.

Once more, the NVA/VC did nothing to comply with the Cambodian request. NVA/VC representatives were therefore invited to participate in a working session with staff members of the Khmer Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 16 March 1970. Nothing positive was achieved, however. The NVA/VC representatives not only cited reasons of their own for non-compliance with the Cambodian request; they also asked in return that

their governments be paid for damages caused to their embassies. Thus ended the working session which was also the last meeting between the Cambodian government and the NVA/VC.

On 25 March 1970, however, the Polish Embassy sent a memorandum to the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informing the latter among other things, of the availability of good office's concerning the evacuation of all North Vietnamese and PRG embassy personnel. On 27 March 1970, all North Vietnamese and PRG embassy personnel took off by ICC aircraft for Hanoi. This departure marked the end of diplomatic relations between Cambodia and North Vietnam and the PRG.

Well before the enemy launched attacks against Cambodia, he had initiated a rumor campaign to create a feeling of insecurity and internal crisis. This was to divide governmental forces in the first place, and then to isolate the government from the popular support; finally it would lead both domestic and world opinion to believe that the war in Cambodia had been staged by Sihanouk followers against the new regime — in other words, that this war was only a civil war.

All of this deception was but common Communist fare to those who were familiar with Communist strategy in Asia. However, to those ill-informed of this Communist practice, as was the case with several foreign observers, the enemy bait was palatable and for a certain time, questions arose as to whether or not Cambodian protests against the armed and overt aggression by NVA/VC forces were in fact justified. How perfect the Communist screenplay was!

In fact, under the pretext of helping Sihanouk return to power, an eventuality rather warmly welcomed by the majority of illiterate (ill-informed common people who lived far from the nation's capital) the enemy was able to incite the civilian population to demonstrate against the legal government. On 26 March 1970, several bloody demonstrations erupted in the city of Kompong Cham; these were quelled only by the intervention of Khmer troops.

On 27 March 1970, a second demonstration, more violent still, took place in Kompong Cham; but this time the army was forced to open fire. In Takeo, similar demonstrations also compelled the Khmer army to intervene.

The same thing happened to the inhabitants of Prey Veng who were stopped by Khmer troops only 15 kilometers from Phnom Penh.

The question on the minds of many people at that time was whether or not these demonstrations had been organized by Sihanouk followers. To clarify the question, I think we should point out the fact that in its interventions, the Khmer forces had detained several NVA/VC cadre among the demonstrators; there was no doubt that it was they who had orchestrated the entire show. We may deduct with reasonable certainty that these cadres were members of the Vietnamese Communist infrastructure because all of these demonstrations were staged in provinces adjacent to NVA/VC sanctuaries.

Following this stage play, the NVA/VC suddenly began on 29 March 1970 their overt aggression against Cambodia. These enemy forces were known to be NVA/VC regular units whose total strength was estimated at between 45,000 and 60,000. Meanwhile, the defending forces, our FANK, numbered merely 35,000.⁵

It was a very sudden and widespread attack conducted along the eastern and southeastern boundaries and coming from the sanctuary areas. The suddenness of these attacks did not cause much of a surprise to the FANK command because it had expected them all along. But the time available for defense preparations was so short (just two days, from 27 to 29 March) that many isolated and weakly manned outposts succumbed under the violence of the first enemy assaults. From the very first days, therefore, the FANK was driven back by the enemy push. In rapid succession, the following towns and cities fell into enemy hands:

In MR-1: Snoul, Chup, Mimot, Krek, Saang, Koh Tham

In MR-2: Kompong Trach

In MR-5: Strung Treng (which had been heavily threatened)

In MR-6: Mondulhiri, Kratie City

⁵Note the change from FARK to FANK following the change in Government on 18 March 1970.

During the month of August 1970, the situation stabilized a little but the enemy did not relent his push. The FANK were found then holding a shrinking area which extended on both sides of the Bassac River and the Tonle Sap Great Lake from the northwest to the southeast. (Map 28)

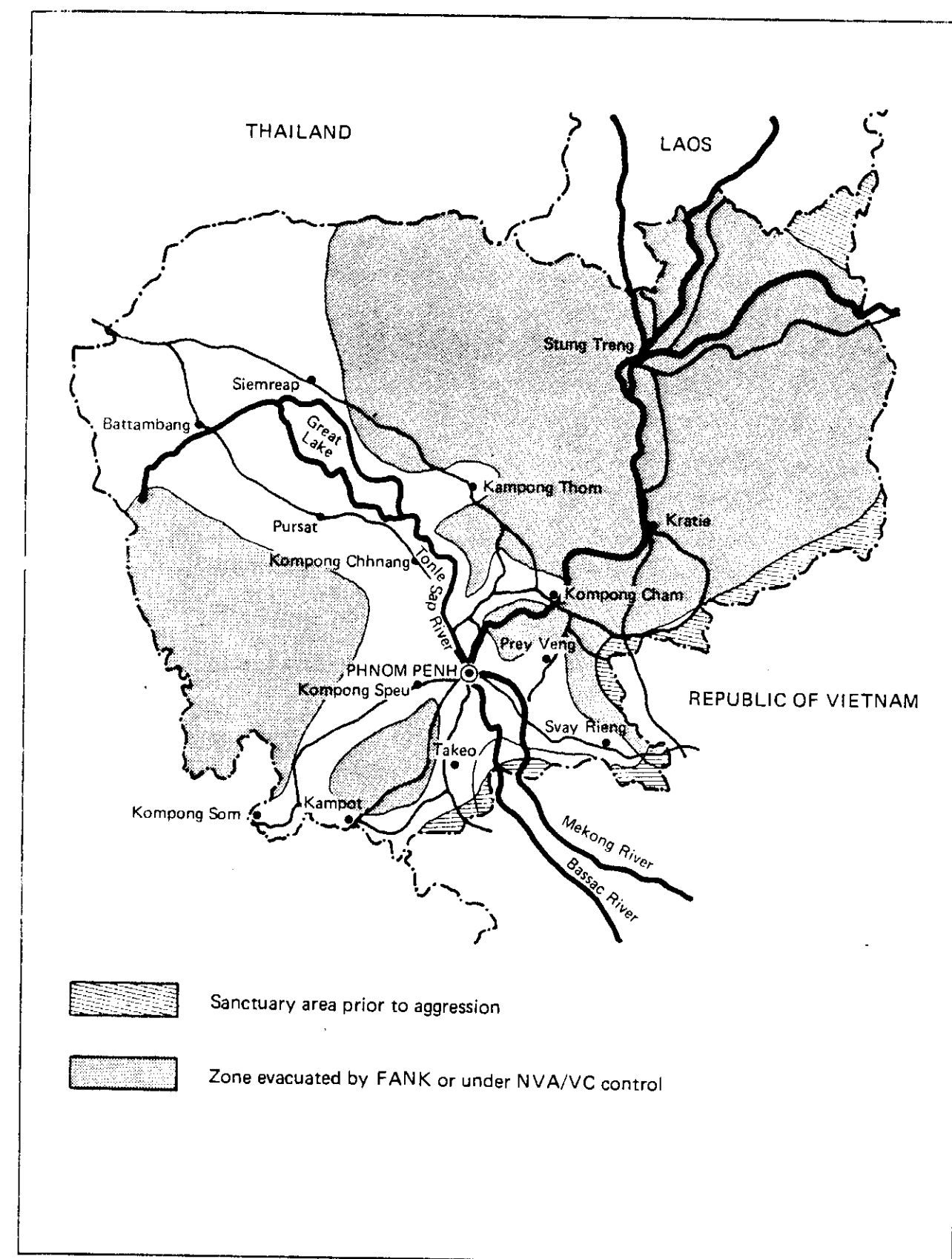
*Khmer Cooperation with the RVN and U.S.
Prior to the Cambodian Incursion*

Immediately after the armed aggression by NVA/VC forces, which was launched against Cambodia from their sanctuaries along the South Vietnamese border, the Khmer Republic government made countless appeals to the United Nations (UN) Security Council for an end to that aggression. Instead of taking action on the Cambodian request, this international organ (the UN Security Council) merely replied that, in view of Cambodia's being governed by the 1954 Geneva Accords, the Khmer Republic had better apply to the co-chairmen of the 1954 Geneva Conference (Soviet Union and Great Britain).

On 31 March 1970, therefore, in a memorandum addressed to the ambassadors of the Soviet Union and Great Britain, the Cambodian government expressed its deep concern about increasingly flagrant and repeated violations of the 1954 Geneva Accords by the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and those of the PRG of South Vietnam. These forces, the memorandum said, not only refused to withdraw from the Cambodian territory, they were now launching overt attacks against Khmer outposts and defense forces within the Khmer national boundaries. The Cambodian government then demanded the reinstatement of the International Control Commission on an urgent basis.

On 6 April 1970, the United Nations Secretariat announced that Secretary General U Thant had decided "to deal with the authorities who effectively controlled the situation in Cambodia," in other words, with the Phnom Penh government and not with the former Chief of State. This first and only positive response by the UN constituted, in effect, an answer to the claims made by Prince Sihanouk who, in a message addressed to His Excellency U Thant, represented himself as the only legal holder of Cambodian authority.

Map 28 -- FANK - Held Areas in Cambodia in August 1970



In early April 1970, General Lon Nol twice received very discreet, night visits by Nguyen Cao Ky, South Vietnam's Vice President. Though highly secret, these visits nevertheless can be seen as the first steps toward reestablishing diplomatic relations between South Vietnam and Cambodia on the one hand and toward the initiation of military cooperation and assistance in the face of a common enemy on the other. It is not known exactly how the first of these visits was arranged. Very few people in Phnom Penh knew of them, and they were attended on the Khmer side by General Lon Nol and Prince Sirik Matak only. It is considered possible, however, that General Lon Nol's younger brother Lon Non played a part in the arrangements.⁶

In conjunction with these activities, President Nixon also issued a warning to the enemy when, announcing the next increment of U.S. troop withdrawal from South Vietnam, he referred to the enemy's escalation in Laos and Cambodia and declared on 20 April 1970:

"The enemy would be taking grave risks if they attempted to use American withdrawals to jeopardize remaining U.S. forces in Vietnam by increased military action in Vietnam, in Cambodia, or in Laos; if they were to do so I shall not hesitate to take strong and effective measures to deal with that situation."

Ten days after issuing this warning, President Nixon announced on 30 April 1970 that U.S. forces, in cooperation with the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) were going to launch immediate attacks to destroy enemy sanctuaries along the Khmer-Vietnamese border.

In Phnom Penh, meanwhile, where the U.S. Embassy was headed by Mr. Lloyd M. Rives, Charge d'affaires, assisted by Lt. Colonel Robert H. Riemensnider, Air Attache, the only cooperation activities that took place were exchanges of information concerning the evolution of the military situation. These exchanges were made through daily contacts by the U.S. Air Attache. No concrete action was taken, however, until President Nixon announced the famous Cambodian Incursion.

⁶ At the same time as these contacts, the Cambodian government was also approached by other countries of the Free World, first Thailand, then the Republic of China (Taiwan), followed by South Korea shortly after. All offered to help in some way.

Toward the end of April 1970, simultaneously with an increase in military personnel attached to the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, contacts between the FANK General Staff and the JGS, RVNAF, as well as MACV, became more regular and increasingly solid, even though diplomatic relations were not established between Phnom Penh and Saigon until a month later, on 27 May 1970.

As far as military cooperation between the FANK and the RVNAF and MACV was concerned, it was first made through exchange visits. In the beginning, an official Khmer military delegation was sent to Saigon for a visit to MACV. The purpose of this visit was to exchange views on the military situation in Cambodia and more particularly, to study the procedures of carrying out an operation whose objective was to evacuate Khmer garrisons in MR-5, mainly the garrisons in Ratanakiri Province. This one-day meeting resulted in plans for the evacuation of these garrisons to Pleiku. Because it lacked the means for the operation, the Cambodian government authorized its conduct by U.S.-RVN troops. On the Cambodian side, participation was limited to two liaison officers: the 5th MR commander and a high ranking officer representing the FANK General Staff.

At the same time, the FANK Command authorized the assignment of one RVNAF liaison officer to each Subdivision commander in the 1st and 2d Military Regions. The purpose of this arrangement was to exchange information and coordinate fire support.

In May 1970, a RVN delegation headed by Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, and including the GVN Minister of Defense, made an official visit to Phnom Penh. At the end of this visit, an agreement was concluded which created a 15-km deep zone on each side of the Cambodian-South Vietnamese border, in which Khmer and Vietnamese military authorities at the Province and District level could operate freely without prior clearance from either government. It was further understood that operations which might require a deeper penetration into Cambodia would be the object of special government agreement. However, the FANK never had the opportunity to make use of this agreement.

In the same spirit of cooperation, the Cambodian government also authorized South Vietnam to establish an operational base at Neak Luong, on the Mekong. This base even received a visit by President Nguyen Van Thieu in June 1970. During this visit, President Thieu met for the first time with H.E. Cheng Heng, then Cambodia's Chief of State, who was accompanied by General Lon Nol and Prince Sisinath Sirik Matak.

While cooperation between military authorities of Cambodia and South Vietnam was becoming closer, the U.S. and FANK strengthened their ties even more by instituting regular Tripartite meetings, initially at MACV headquarters or the JGS in Saigon. Here FANK, RVNAF and MACV delegations met each month. Because of its lack of facilities and material resources, the FANK General Staff was not able to host tripartite meetings until 1972.

The objectives of these tripartite meetings were to: (1) exchange information concerning South Vietnam, Cambodia and a part of Laos; (2) study and plan for current military operations which were to be conducted either by Khmer forces alone or by combined forces FANK-RVNAF) with U.S. air support; (3) study and plan for logistic support, and; (4) study and plan for the training of Khmer military personnel.

In 1970, a liaison office was established by the RVNAF in Phnom Penh, following a parallel agreement to install a similar office by the FANK in Saigon.

As far as air support was concerned, cooperation was equally close. The Khmer Air Force, for example, installed an Air Support Coordination Detachment at the U.S. 7th Air Force TACC in Saigon, another at Tan Chau to accompany river convoys, and a detachment of observer-interpreters at Bien Hoa. In return, the Vietnam Air Force also installed an Air Support Coordination Detachment in Phnom Penh which dealt directly with the FANK General Staff in matters concerning air support. During this period of cooperation, the majority of daylight air support missions, especially reconnaissance support missions, were provided by the U.S. 7th Air Force and the VNAF, both of which also flew night support missions that only they could provide. As to the Khmer Air Force, it was responsible for transport missions within Cambodia and close air support in medium-scale operations.

The Status of the FANK on 1 May 1970

Up to the eve of 29 March 1970, when the enemy began his surprise attack, the FANK had not expanded in any significant way. From the very beginning, therefore, they had to defend themselves against an enemy who was clearly superior in strength, much better equipped and more combat-experienced. This accounted for the loss of territory from the first days of attack. Gradually, however, the FANK made significant progress in the implementation of their program of expansion and reinforcement. Tens of thousands of volunteers from all walks of life (peasants, city dwellers, students, and even civil servants) joined the armed forces. They were followed by the reenlistment of retired servicemen who then constituted the cadre of the young republican army. This rally of volunteers, which was so vast and so spontaneous, effectively solved the problem of manpower shortages. But at the same time, it also burdened the FANK command with difficulties in materiel, logistic support (armament, equipment, food, barracks, transportation, etc.), and training. The FANK were experiencing growing pains of crisis proportions. Young men in civilian clothes and sandals were seen riding in civilian trucks and passenger cars to frontline areas as reinforcements. Only 5% of these young recruits had gone through even a few days of basic military training. Nearly all of them went to fight the war with empty hands, armed only with a determination to serve and defend their fatherland.

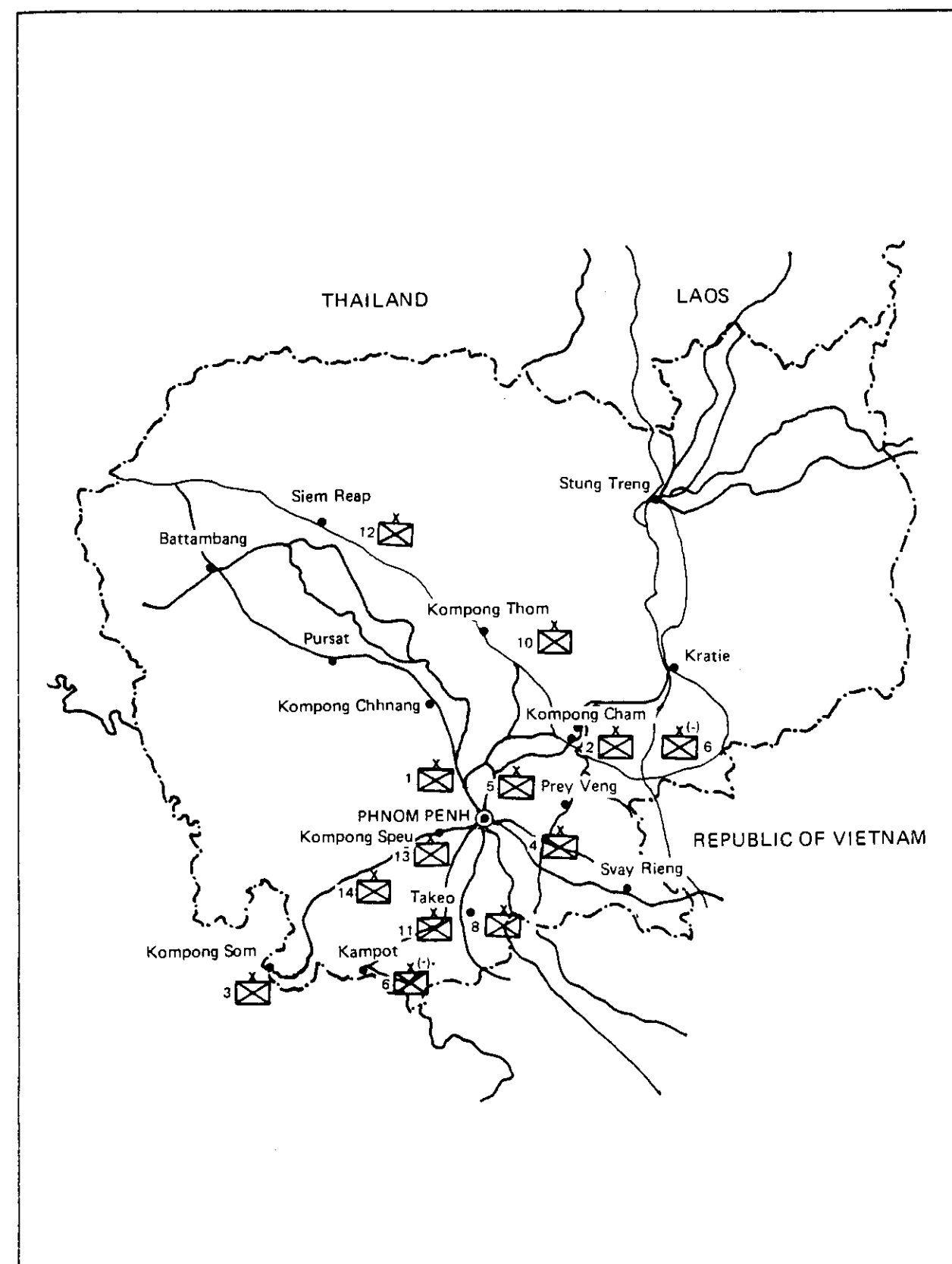
Not until the first weeks of April 1970 did equipment and weapons begin to arrive. These were Chinese-made weapons that U.S. and RVN forces had captured from the enemy. This worsened the existing disparity of armament in the FANK and complicated the work for logistic services even more. (The AK-47 assault rifle was an exception, since it had been in the FANK inventory in relatively large numbers for several years).

In any event, it was during this month of April 1970 that the emerging FANK took on a new look and their first major units were

established. By 1 May 1970, 12 infantry brigades had been activated and deployed as follows: (Map 29)

- 1st Inf. Brigade: headquartered in Phnom Penh and constituting the general reserve.
- 2d Inf. Brigade: based in Kompong Cham and the main force unit of the 1st MR.
- 3d Inf. Brigade: activated in the 2d MR and based in the Kompong Som area.
- 4th Inf. Brigade: activated in Prey Veng (MR-1). This brigade was assigned the mission of defending the special zone of the Mekong River. It operated in the areas of Prey Veng and Neak Luong.
- 5th Inf. Brigade: composed basically of Muslim Khmers and intended for future deployment to north of Stung. Located in Phnom Penh, it served as a reserve unit.
- 6th Inf. Brigade: also composed basically of Muslim Khmers. Its units operated in the Kampot area (MR-2) and in Kompong Cham (MR-1).
- 8th Inf. Brigade: composed of volunteers from the provinces of Takeo and Kandal. It was based in the border area of Takeo and Chau Doc (MR-2).
- 10th Inf. Brigade: activated in Siem Reap, then deployed to Kompong Thom (MR-4). Its units were stationed in Oudar Meanchey.
- 11th Inf. Brigade: activated with units stationed in Takeo (MR-2) and reinforced with volunteers from Kandal and Takeo. It defended Takeo and Route No. 5.
- 12th Inf. Brigade: activated exclusively with volunteers from Battambang and Siem Reap (MR-4). It defended Siem Riep against the 5th VC Division.
- 13th Inf. Brigade: activated at Kompong Speu (MR-2) during this period, this brigade participated in the operation for the defense of Takeo-Angtasom. Later, it was redeployed permanently to Kompong Speu for the defense and protection of Route No. 4.
- 14th Inf. Brigade: based at Tram Khnar (MR-2) along with elements of the antiaircraft artillery half-brigade. This brigade had been reconstituted after its defeat by enemy forces from Phuoc Long.

Map 29 — Locations of Principal FANK infantry Units on 1 May 1970



FANK Activities during the Incursion

During the period of cross-border operations conducted by U.S.-RVN forces, very little was known by the FANK General Staff except for the fact that these operations were designed to destroy NVA/VC sanctuaries and COSVN headquarters in Cambodia. To my knowledge, only General Lon Nol had been informed to some extent of U.S. intentions concerning these operations. As to the FANK General Staff, the information it obtained was general and sketchy. It only knew that U.S. and RVN forces had been authorized to conduct a military operation across the Cambodian-South Vietnamese border during the period May-June 1970. The FANK had no detail whatsoever concerning the plans of this operation; it did not even know the size of forces committed.

This lack of information extended equally to the results of these operations. No details of the results were ever communicated to the Cambodian government.

The only concrete thing that perhaps resulted from this incursion was that, pending the standardization of armament provided by future U.S.-military assistance, the FANK received a quantity of Chinese weapons and ammunition captured from the enemy. These weapons and ammunition were delivered from Saigon by VNAF aircraft.

Following the incursion, the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh was augmented by a new section called Military Equipment Delivery Team Cambodia (MEDTC) whose chief, Brigadier General Maxis, worked in close cooperation with the FANK General Staff on logistic problems. Meanwhile, U.S. military attaches continued and even increased their contacts with the FANK General Staff on operational matters. It was only then that the U.S. military assistance program began to take shape, a program jointly studied and planned by MEDTC and the FANK General Staff, based on funds allotted by the U.S. toward this end.

However, even before MEDTC was installed in Phnom Penh, the FANK had already received a substantial amount of materiel from the U.S., especially signal equipment for territorial units and air-ground communications. This materiel assistance, which came through South Vietnam,

was the work of the Politico-Military Office (POL/MIL) of the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, created in June 1970 and headed by Mr. Jonathan F. Ladd.

In addition to signal equipment, the FANK also received U.S. weapons which were no longer used by the RVNAF. These weapons enabled the FANK to equip newly activated units. Also, cargo trucks were made available which had been purchased from Australia by the United States.

Meanwhile, tripartite meetings regularly took place with the presence of a representative from POL/MIL until the creation of MEDTC, after which both U.S. offices were represented.

From a purely military viewpoint, therefore, one may say that from 18 March to the end of 1970, liaison among Cambodian, South Vietnamese and U.S. military authorities was effectively established at various echelons of command and in all three services of the FANK.

As far as operational cooperation was concerned, two major periods could be distinguished. The first was the period of cross-border operations (May-June 1970) and the second followed after June 1970, in which only U.S. firepower support was provided for operations, which were either conducted by combined Khmer-RVN forces or by FANK units alone.

During this second period, several combined FANK-RVNAF operations were conducted with the air support provided alternately by the USAF and VNAF. These operations were designed to clear enemy pressure around Kompong Cham and Svay Rieng in MR-1, Takeo and Kompong Speu in MR-2 and to restore security to Route No. 4, leading toward the port of Kompong Som. However, helilift support for the majority of these operations was provided solely by the VNAF, whose assets augmented those of the Khmer Air Force.

FANK-RVNAF Cooperation after U.S. Withdrawal

Following the U.S. troop withdrawal from South Vietnam, there were two distinct major battle areas in Cambodia. The first coincided with Khmer MR-1, and the second was MR-2.

In MR-1, major combined operations conducted by Khmer and RVN forces took place especially in areas along Route No. 7 and in the Mimot and Krek rubber plantations. These operations were designed to clear enemy pressure which was exerted both on Route 13 near Loc Ninh in South Vietnam and on the plantation areas extending toward Kompong Cham.

In MR-2, two large-scale combined operations were conducted by Khmer and RVN forces to relieve Kompong Speu and clear Route No. 4, following the interdiction of Pich Nil Pass by the enemy. ARVN units which participated in these operations belonged to the RVN IV Corps commanded by Lt. General Ngo Dzu.

During all of these operations, air, firepower and intelligence support were provided by combined activities of the U.S., RVN and Khmer air forces; support in airlift was the responsibility of the VNAF and Khmer Air Force. All missions of direct and close air support were assigned to the Khmer Air Force, while indirect and remote missions were the responsibility of the USAF and VNAF, which had more adequate resources. All reconnaissance and observation support missions were flown by the USAF.

The combined efforts of all three national air forces not only provided support for the majority of major operations, they also contributed to the protection of river convoys on the Mekong River. In this mission, the VNAF would be in charge of support to the limit of the Cambodian border. From there on to Neak Luong, air support would be provided by the USAF in cooperation with the Khmer Air Force. Beyond Neak Luong, air support was the sole responsibility of the Khmer Air Force. Fire coordination was effected through an Air Support Coordination Detachment installed in the convoy CP by the Khmer Air Force.

Direct protection and escort of river convoys by naval ships was also provided by a combination of Khmer and RVN naval resources.

For lack of adequate resources by the Khmer, continuous air support during the hours of darkness was provided by the USAF and VNAF. For this purpose, the VNAF maintained a flight of two AC-119 aircraft at Pochentong Air Base in Phnom Penh.

Critical Analysis and Conclusions

During the first hours of the conflict, the Khmer government, as well as Khmer political and military leaders, entertained the hope of resolving this grave problem by peaceful means, especially those means that could be undertaken by that great international organization, the United Nations. As a full member of the United Nations, Cambodia had in fact hoped that this organization would do for Cambodia what it had done for South Korea and Israel by committing its own security troops for the maintenance of peace. Unfortunately, our hopes did not come true.

Therefore, as soon as President Nixon had announced his decision on 30 April 1970 to commit U.S. combat troops in Cambodia, an intervention which was designed to destroy the war potential of NVA/VC forces installed in Cambodia and undertaken simultaneously with intensive air interdiction activities against the enemy's main supply line, the Ho Chi Minh Trail, there was reason for the Cambodian leadership to feel immediately relieved and content. Indeed we witnessed, in the wake of this intervention, a marked though temporary decrease in combat capabilities on the part of the enemy. Knowing, however, that this important intervention by U.S. forces was both limited in time and scope, the enemy avoided confrontation and was thus able to conserve his main forces while waiting out the deadline for U.S. withdrawal.

If a careful analysis were made of this aspect of the problem and from an enemy viewpoint, one might say that the enemy made a well-calculated move when his forces took the areas east of the Mekong River (Stung Treng, Kratie, Kompong Cham, Prey Veng and Svay Rieng) and used them as sanctuaries, firmly established this time deep in Cambodian territory. For friendly troops no longer occupied this part of Cambodia and in a certain sense intervention operations by U.S. and RVN forces in Cambodia merely pushed these mobile and viable enemy sanctuaries deeper inside this abandoned part of Cambodia.

On the Cambodian side, we observed that these operations consisted of frontal, rather than enveloping maneuvers. This gave the enemy ample

opportunity for seeking refuge deeper inside Cambodia. Therefore, this part of Cambodia was effectively cut off and isolated from the rest of the country. The local population who stayed behind were thus caught in the grip and remained under the total control and domination of the enemy.

Although the U.S. Air Force continued to apply its efforts to this region, enemy forces were nevertheless able to bring in reinforcements, organize themselves and eventually change the outlook of this war of aggression against Cambodia into one of civil war between communist and republican Khmer.

We can conclude as well that because of the differences between the objectives sought by the U.S. and the RVN and those of the Khmer, the critical assessments of this incursion may also differ widely.

If, in fact this operation was conducted solely within the framework of Vietnamization as the U.S. command had intended it, then it might be considered a success, because it largely contributed to the achievement of Vietnamization within the time limits imposed by the U.S. government. On the other hand, the withdrawal of U.S. troops would be possible only if the RVNAF were capable of taking over. It was difficult at the time to tell that the RVNAF had that capability. For one thing, the NVA/VC sanctuaries were solidly anchored along the entire western border of South Vietnam. For another, the armed forces of South Vietnam were compelled to extend themselves precariously in order to fill the voids created by the departure of U.S. combat units.

The last major actions undertaken by U.S. forces across South Vietnam and in Cambodia, particularly as far as the Cambodian Incursion was concerned, provided a feeling of "self-assurance" both for the RVNAF and the FANK. Perhaps they also imparted a certain feeling of moral satisfaction to our American ally who was disengaging himself from a part of the world where he had been involved and had fought for more than 20 years.

As far as the FANK Command was concerned, however, and within the framework of its war efforts against the NVA/VC forces, the destruction or even occupation of that part of Cambodia which was under enemy control, if only done temporarily, did not end the problem for FANK. For,

while these temporary effects were sought by the U.S. command, in view of their absolute necessity for Vietnamization to succeed, their repercussions fell with all their weight onto the FANK which were from the beginning not sufficiently prepared to confront an enemy of this size. To avoid massive bombings by U.S. and RVN forces, the enemy fell back deeper and deeper inside the Cambodian territory. These bombings and attacks by friendly forces also caused the complete evacuation of these areas by the civilian population, into which moved the enemy immediately. The result of all this was that a sizeable part of the Cambodian territory was lost to the enemy.

But if the destruction of these enemy sanctuaries had been followed by the permanent occupation of the recovered territory, it would have been much more beneficial to Cambodia, as well as to South Vietnam because, as we can now see the enemy was able to reconstitute his forces and renew his activities from the destroyed sanctuaries.

In addition, we have also to consider the psychological impact created by this operation which marked the last episode of the presence of U.S. combat troops in South Vietnam. The publicity with which the U.S. disengagement was made largely benefited the enemy, who took advantage of it to sap the morale of the civilian population and troops alike in Cambodia, as well as in South Vietnam. As a result, there was a certain lowering in morale on our side; during the same period, the other side, encouraged by ever increasing support and assistance, became more aggressive and began to prepare for its eventual and final victory.

The U.S. policy of disengagement and the departure of U.S. troops in the midst of this critical period, during which the last decisive card was to be played thus resulted in a void so great on the allied side that neither the FANK nor the RVNAF were ever able to fill it.

This void was all the more aggravated by the most unfortunate Watergate scandal, which considerably weakened the prestige of U.S. executive branch of government vis-a-vis the American public. And the departure of President Nixon from the political scene in a certain sense sealed the fate of Indochina, because the cutbacks in and eventual termination of U.S. military assistance to the Khmer Republic and South Vietnam inevitably resulted in a disequilibrium in the balance of forces.

The final outcome of this long Vietnam war, conforming as it did to the will of the enemy and to the desire of certain responsible parties, became known on 17 April 1975. On that date, Cambodia, which had been dragged into the arena of the Indochinese conflict as the last participant, succumbed as the first victim. This brought in its wake the fall of Saigon and Vientiane, thus closing a long chapter that extended over more than a decade in the political and military history of modern times, a history rich in lessons and also in sufferings.

With the fall of Cambodia there died a millennial civilization and -- irony of fate -- there was reborn in its place a cynical demagoguery. The Khmer Republic had thought to bring Cambodian political institutions up to date by eliminating a monarchy, while at the same time preserving all that was most noble of the long Khmer civilization. The actual results were not only disastrous in terms of human loss, but the so-called "democratic" regime which came to power is more barbaric than any other in our long history - and it happened in this 20th century.

CHAPTER VIII

Observations and Conclusions

The Cambodian cross-border operations were the largest ever conducted by the RVNAF. At certain times the RVNAF committed up to 50,000 troops who fought alongside and in full coordination with such U.S. units as the 1st, 25th, 4th Infantry Divisions, the 1st Cavalry Division and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. For the RVNAF, this was the first time that our major units had been deployed in such numbers at the same time; the total force committed was equivalent to six divisions, the Airborne Division, the 9th, 21st, 25 (-), 22d (-), 23d (-) Infantry Divisions, five ranger groups (of 3 battalions each), one marine brigade (of three battalions) and nine armored cavalry squadrons, about one-half of the total ARVN armor force. It was also the first time RVNAF major units operated in such numbers as a single maneuver force. Up to the incursion, most of them, until replaced by RF and PF units, had performed only pacification support activities, while U.S. forces played the major combat role.

For the Vietnamese Navy, it was also the largest force assembled up to that time for a single operation. In combined activities with U.S. naval units for the clearing of the Mekong River, the Vietnamese Navy also employed about 70 ships of all tonnages; these operated alongside 30 U.S. naval ships. The VNN also succeeded in evacuating approximately 70,000 Vietnamese residents from Cambodia.

Although forced to fight on unfamiliar terrain, the RVNAF had proved to be thoroughly combat effective, despite initial shortcomings in the coordination of armor and infantry actions. But with these shortcomings remedied the RVNAF truly held the initiative throughout the entire operation.

For the numerous individual operations, all planning and supervision was performed by Vietnamese staffs. Logistic support was also provided by the RVNAF system, with the assistance of U.S. advisers, whose role was primarily that of coordinating and supplying materiel and assets not available to the RVNAF, such as command and gunships, night medevac helicopters and B-52 support.

A remarkable thing about the early cross-border operations was the fact that for the first time in several years RVNAF units went into combat unaccompanied by U.S. advisers. During the combined operations, however, U.S. advisers did accompany ARVN units into Cambodia as far as the 30-km limit. To operate without U.S. advisers was a source of pride for ARVN tactical commanders of battalion level and above. They felt more self-assured of their command abilities and, in fact, they all proved that they could manage by themselves. Not only were they able to solve all problems related to the support of ARVN units, they also effectively maintained liaison and coordination with U.S. support units, a function which heretofore had been performed by U.S. advisers only.

Perhaps as a result of South Vietnamese maturity and combat effectiveness, U.S. advisers were removed from a number of ARVN battalions after the incursion. These units had indeed proved that they were capable of doing without advisers. Therefore, U.S. advisory teams were greatly reduced in certain ARVN units and in some instances, they were replaced by liaison teams. For ARVN units with missions to be carried out within well-defined time limits and requiring the support and assistance of U.S. combat support assets, the presence of U.S. advisers was still necessary because they could obtain fire support, medevac helicopters and resupplies more rapidly and in a more reliable manner.

The RVNAF, not constrained by time or space during the cross-border operations, and relying on the support provided by U.S. forces, advanced, on occasion, up to 60 km inside Cambodia. (As when they helped to relieve Kompong Cham, Kompong Speu, and the Pich Nil Pass on Route 4.)

On the other hand the effectiveness of U.S. forces in Cambodia was constrained both by time and space. They were not allowed to advance

deeper than 30 km into Cambodia and they were also compelled to withdraw by 2400 hours on 30 June 1970. One of the factors limiting the freedom of President Nixon to extend these limits on U.S. operations in Cambodia was, doubtless, the public opposition to the U.S. combat role in Cambodia. Several demonstrations took place in the U.S. just a few days after U.S. troops went into Cambodia. Organized and instigated by the anti-war movement, these demonstrations vocally and even violently opposed the U.S. incursion in Cambodia. At Kent State University, for example, students clashed with U.S. National Guard troops, resulting in four students dead and twelve others wounded. The enemy no doubt knew how to exploit this situation. His main force units withdrew beyond the 30 km limit and avoided contact with U.S. forces in order to conserve their force. Their goal was to wait out the U.S. incursion and resume activities immediately after U.S. troops had been withdrawn. As a result, when they progressed into Cambodia, U.S. and RVNAF units made contact with only small enemy forces, mostly logistic or support elements whose mission it was to harass and delay the advance of our troops.

I believe that if U.S. units had been authorized more time and more space to maneuver, enemy main force units would not have been able to hide and would have sustained serious losses in men and supplies to U.S. air and artillery firepower.

General Results

The Cambodian Incursion of 1970 inflicted severe losses on the enemy, both in human life and in war materiel. His base areas and storage-points along the Cambodian border were practically paralyzed. It was the estimate of the JGS, supported by HQ MACV, that it would take the enemy a minimum of 6 to 9 months to reorganize his logistic installations and partially restock them.

Friendly forces captured from the enemy a total of 22,892 individual weapons, armament for the equivalent of 54 enemy main force battalions

of 450 men each. The number of crew-served weapons captured amounted to 2,509, enough to equip 27 infantry battalions. In addition, friendly forces also captured and destroyed approximately 2,500 tons of assorted ammunition, enough to sustain enemy forces oriented against MR 3 and MR 4 in combat for 9 to 12 months; it was equivalent to the amount of ammunition that these enemy forces had expended during the previous year. NVA forces would also run into serious shortages in food because approximately 14,046,000 lbs of rice, among other foodstuff, had either been seized or destroyed. It was estimated that this amount of rice could feed enemy forces for a period from 4 to 6 months. In the huge amount of ammunition seized by our forces, there were in excess of 143,000 rounds of mortar, rocket, and recoilless rifle. Based on knowledge of past enemy consumption, these rounds were the equivalent of what had been used by the enemy during the past 14 months in attacks-by-fire against our installations and bases. Another significant enemy loss was our capture or destruction of 435 enemy vehicles of all types.

Although the enemy could always procure rice from local sources, either in Cambodia or just across the border in South Vietnam, he could not do the same as far as ammunition and equipment were concerned. With the port at Kompong Som now closed, these latter items would, in the future have to come down the Ho Chi Minh trail, a development which would significantly inhibit the enemy's ability to conduct combat operations in South Vietnam, especially in Military Regions 3 and 4.

While the incursion's primary objective was the destruction of enemy bases and supplies, the enemy also incurred considerable casualties in manpower. A total of 11,349 enemy troops were killed and another 2,328 were made prisoners or rallied to our side.¹ These casualties

¹Enemy loss figures and examples of impact are taken from President Nixon's report (cited in Chapter III, footnote 2) and are cumulative through 29 June 1970.

alone equalled the strength of an enemy division. To replace these losses, it was the estimate of the JGS, supported by HQ MACV, that it would take the enemy at least 4 to 6 months to recruit and train new troops.

Among the enemy troops and cadres who rallied to our side, the most important was Lt. Colonel Nguyen Thanh, deputy commander of the enemy 2d Subregion, who surrendered in Tay Ninh on 20 May 1970. He disclosed that the U.S.-RVN cross-border operation had completely upset enemy plans to occupy Kompong Cham and Svay Rieng by 1 May 1970 and then assemble all transportation means locally available to rapidly move the NVA 7th and 9th Divisions to Phnom Penh which they were to occupy by 3 May. Once in control of the Cambodian capital, the enemy planned to launch a "high point" against Saigon with an intensity comparable to the 1968 Tet Offensive. But all of these plans were pre-empted by our incursion into Cambodia.

In addition to enemy losses inflicted by our ground combat units, we must also include those inflicted by U.S. tactical air and B-52's. During the operation, U.S. tactical air flew a total of 6,017 combat support missions or an average of 210 missions per day (168 preplanned and 42 on call). Also, during the period of combined U.S.-RVN operations in Cambodia, there was a total of 21 "Commando Vaults" or 15,000-lb bombs dropped from C-130's to clear landing zones and, in a few cases, against special targets such as supply points and vehicle parks. These Commando Vault missions were conducted against Base Area 354 and the Fishhook. The results obtained from U.S. tactical air missions during the incursion were reported as: 520 enemy troops killed, 567 secondary explosions, 4,571 enemy installations, 52 vehicles of all types, 30 bridges and approximately 268 tons of rice destroyed. U.S. gunships (AC-119 "Stingrays," and AC-120 "Specters," and AC-130 flareships) expended a total of 1.5 million rounds of ammunition with their 8-barrel "Gatling" machineguns and 8,600 flares in support of infantry troops. Every night, an average of three gunships provided continuous coverage from the air.

B-52's also played an important role in the destruction of enemy installations and supply points. During the period 24 April to 30 June 1970, they flew 186 support missions, mostly concentrating on the Fishhook area and Base Areas 352 and 353 were COSVN headquarters and several important enemy supply storages were reportedly located. Even prior to the operation, 36 B-52 missions had been directed against these areas, facilitating penetration and subsequent exploitation by friendly troops. The most significant of all these B-52 missions was one conducted on 11 May against a target northwest of Mimot. Friendly troops who penetrated the target area to assess bomb damage found 101 enemy bodies. Later, when the operation had been terminated, intelligence reports indicated that this B-52 mission had struck an underground shelter housing part of COSVN headquarters. The role played by B-52's was also vital in covering the safe withdrawal of friendly troops from this area. 36 B-52 missions struck an area northwest of Base Areas 351, 352, and 353, preventing enemy forces from pursuing our troops. Again, when friendly forces had withdrawn from the Fishhook area, B-52's concentrated their strikes against suspected targets that our troops had not searched. The results obtained from B-52 missions were reported to include: 239 enemy killed, 329 secondary explosions, 2,259 installations and underground shelters, destroyed or damaged, and 39 anti-aircraft weapons destroyed.

A comparison of enemy and friendly losses after the operation shows that our losses amounted to only 1/11 of those of the enemy. Most of our casualties were caused by mines and booby traps when our forces advanced into enemy base areas. The enemy was, of course, familiar with these areas since they had made use of them for a long time. But these areas were totally unfamiliar to our troops, which accounted for the casualties to our forces by mines and booby traps.

One remarkable result of the incursion was that COSVN headquarters had to displace west of the Mekong River for security. During this displacement, all of its radio networks ceased to operate and no orders, therefore, were issued to subordinate enemy units. Perhaps as a result

of this temporary disability, enemy forces were confused as to what to do in the face of our advance. Consequently, in the absence of COSVN orders, these enemy units were compelled to avoid contact, disperse themselves and conserve their force. They rarely reacted forcefully toward our units. When, a short time later, COSVN radio networks did become active again their signal level was much weaker and transmissions not as frequent as before.

The most important result of the Cambodian incursion was perhaps the fact that enemy main force units were driven away from South Vietnam and from its border areas. The departure of these units caused a disruption of coordination between enemy main, local and guerrilla forces and between the enemy infrastructure and these forces. Enemy activities inside South Vietnam, therefore, were no longer as extensive or as effective as they had been. From a strategic viewpoint, this operation caused the enemy to extend and disperse his forces even more, as these forces were forced to spread over Cambodia, in addition to their normal deployments in the DMZ area, in South Vietnam and in Laos. The enemy's requirements for support and coordination therefore multiplied and caused him serious difficulties.

The operation also left enemy troops with a feeling of insecurity. They found that their top echelon headquarters such as COSVN and its military command had been forced to displace and all the areas that thus far had been considered as inviolable were now penetrated, destroyed or damaged and vulnerable to further incursions by our forces. There was a perceptible lowering of the morale of enemy units located in RVN III and IV Corps zones, as accustomed levels of supply and support were unavailable, following attacks on the base areas along the border.

Lessons Learned

The experiences gained during the Cambodian Incursion provided the RVNAF with several valuable lessons.

Personnel Loss Reporting and Replacement

During the operation, ARVN ranger and armor units met with serious difficulties in the replacement of losses. As a special incentive, ranger and armor units had, for some time, enjoyed the privilege of directly recruiting replacements. This gave the unit commanders an opportunity to pass on the quality of recruits before they were sent to basic training. This system, which ensured high quality recruits, could not keep up with the growing requirements generated by the sustained combat operations of the incursion. To resolve their difficulties, the Armor and Ranger Commands not only assisted their units in recruitment operations, but also allowed them to recruit more than they were authorized in order to have enough personnel in the pipeline to satisfy replacement needs. Replacement quotas for armor and ranger units were also allotted by J-1, JGS, based on recruiting and training results.

The reporting of unit strength and losses during operations was done every 7 and 15 days, respectively. It was found, however, that this reporting schedule did not permit effective monitoring of unit strength and replacing of unit losses; the tempo of the fighting resulted in increasing losses everyday. To remedy this shortcoming, the JGS instructed units to report their losses every day through operational channels. This measure proved effective in meeting the unusual requirements of the incursion.

Tactical Operations

Foremost among problem areas concerning tactical operations during the Cambodian Incursion was terrain. Not all ARVN units that participated in this incursion were familiar with the type of dense jungle and mountainous terrain they found in border areas. For those units, which usually operated in the flat, open terrain of the Mekong Delta, such as the 9th, 21st, and 25th Divisions, the terrain of the areas of operation as found in northern Tay Ninh and the Fishhook presented quite serious problems in command and control, fire coordination

and observation. These units did require some time to get acquainted with their new areas of operation and this lowered to some extent their combat effectiveness.

Searching for and discovering enemy supply caches proved to be a difficult and time consuming problem for ARVN units. Prior to the incursion, there was only general information as to the existence of enemy supply storages in the areas of operation. There were no detailed intelligence reports which helped in locating exactly and identifying specifically the various types of caches to be found later. Despite the extensive use of reconnaissance planes, it was impossible to detect these supply caches from the air because they were usually located in the deep jungle and were well concealed. To assist ARVN units in their search, a number of Khmer troops were made available to serve as guides. These Khmer guides were valuable because they were selected from among those who had previously participated in the transportation of NVA supplies from the port of Sihanoukville to various base areas. Several enemy prisoners and several RVNAF personnel previously held prisoner in the base areas and since returned to RVNAF control, were also used to assist in searching and locating supply caches. In general, because of their localized experience and knowledge, they were useful only in those areas where they had operated. This showed that the enemy had taken great care in keeping his system of supply caches secret. During the operation, our forces also captured tons of enemy documents, which provided much new information concerning the enemy system for logistics and infiltration of personnel.

But finally it was the enemy himself who revealed the locations of these supply caches to our troops. This was true especially in the Fishhook area. Before our forces went into Cambodia, many people believed that because of their extensiveness and great numbers, perhaps enemy supply storages were not well organized and protected. But what our forces finally discovered during their search came about as a mild surprise because all of his supply storages were well organized well concealed and well protected. Most of them were underground caches protected against artillery fire and adverse weather. Thus, our troops learned that wherever a contact was made with enemy troops, surely

something important was located nearby, either a storage area or an installation.

Another helpful initiative was the introduction by U.S. II Field Force of two Rome Plow companies. The original mission for the plows was to cut roads into the enemy base areas, permitting the removal of captured enemy materiel by truck and thereby conserving helicopter lift for the RVNAF operations. After introduction, it was realized that the plows were very effective in the search for supplies within the bases areas. In this second mission, the plows could neutralize enemy mines and booby traps, which otherwise caused many friendly casualties. The plows also collapsed enemy bunkers, causing many enemy casualties. The only drawback with the Rome Plow units was that they needed protection and part of our forces had to be diverted for this task. The most effective protection was perhaps that provided by armor units. Had the value of the plows in searching the base areas been anticipated they might have been employed about one week earlier, rather than mid-May, when actually employed.

The incursion showed that the complement of one squadron of VNAF helicopters per corps was insufficient for the level of combat encountered. There were no helicopters dedicated to a single mission; they were used interchangeably as command ships, gunships, for supply, medevac and troop transport. This level of assets, combined with a policy to use VNAF helicopters to the maximum extent, created some problems, even though it was possible to request additional helicopters from the U.S. VNAF helicopter pilots lacked experience in night flight, except those of the 214th Squadron who had flown night missions for the Special Forces. As a result, RVNAF units had to rely on U.S. medevac units for emergency evacuation at night. Drawing lessons from the Cambodian experience, the VNAF stepped up night flying training for its pilots and eventually set aside from two to six medevac helicopters for each military region for use in medical evacuation only.

As to gunship helicopters, they were for the most part overused or misused by ARVN infantry units. This stemmed from the poor habits of ARVN unit commanders who, at each contact with the enemy, invariably called for the support of gunships, even when the targets were solid

fortifications or underground shelters. Some ARVN commanders even called for the support of both gunships and tactical air at the same time, completely oblivious to the time delay involved in each type of support. Meanwhile, it seemed that their organic artillery, which was always available for rapid and accurate fire support, was not always used to the maximum of its capabilities.

When used ARVN artillery performed extremely well during the operation, providing responsive and accurate fire. This was a valuable combat support asset for ARVN infantry units of regimental size; each of them was directly supported by at least one battery, reinforced as required by U.S. artillery units. To ensure effective support, ARVN artillery observers were made available to the company level and one artillery liaison team was assigned to each task force. Unfortunately, these liaison teams were not used properly by ARVN tactical commanders who, as had been said, preferred the employment of gunships and tactical air even when the target was within effective artillery range. During the operation, very few ARVN commanders took time to analyze the nature of each target in order to apply the most appropriate type of fire support. In addition to direct support provided by ARVN artillery units, ARVN task forces received support from U.S. artillery units through U.S. liaison officers assigned to each of them. However, U.S. artillery support was often slow in responding because U.S. artillery units observed strict safety regulations. For example, they had to make sure that no friendly aircraft were in danger anywhere along the trajectory; they checked also to see that the impact area was free of friendly elements.

Because of sustained operation conducted on foreign soil, ARVN field commanders took the commendable initiative of rotating combat units, giving each of them adequate time for rest, recuperation and refitting between operations. Periods of rest varied from one week to ten days. As a result, ARVN Infantry battalions enjoyed a high combat strength and they were always fresh and ready for combat.