

A new operational analysis: 1st Australian Task Force Vietnam, 1966-1971

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The Vietnam Combat Database

Example of an original contact report

CONFIDENTIAL

ENCLOSURE 4 TO
8 RAR COMBAT OPS
AFTER ACTION REPORT

CONTACT AFTER ACTION REPORT OP KEPIERRA

Part 1

- Report by No 38520 Sgt D.H.JUCKEL, 8 RAR, A Coy, 3 Pl.
- Date/Time of contact was 271547H, at grid location of YS345637
- Duration of (i) Firefight: 10 mins, for a total of 10 mins.
- Description of contact, including task and events prior to contact and friendly/enemy reaction. Include sketch.

The task was to do a recce-in-force of the western side of the re-entrant at the above grid reference. We discovered bunker-signs and shook out in extended line from the top of the ridge to the creek. The enemy initiated the contact with 2-3 claymores and 1 RPG. followed by long bursts of 2-5 AK47s. The section 2IC was only 1 ur feet from the claymore, which was badly sighted.

- Description of the terrain and canopy, including estimated ranges of visibility.

Steep and rocky with a poor visibility of 5-7 metres.

- Who was the first to see the enemy (names not required; insert fwd scout, MG No 1, etc as applicable.) - The fwd scout.
- Distance to the enemy when first sighted was 20 metres.

Example of a database record

Contacts Master Database.fp5

Layout #3

Fr Units Involved: 8 pl C Coy 3 RAR

En Type: RRF

1074
Records: 4667
Sorted

SPACE AND TIME

Location of Incident Name: _____

Date: 13/3/1968 Time: 2152 Duration: _____

Grid Ref: YS487528 Grid Ref E W: 487 Grid Ref N S: 528

Description of Incident

The pl had a section ambush in place on a used track. 8 enemy approached from the N and were engaged by the rear sentry. 3 enemy jumped into a ditch that was parallel to the track. The MG was fired along the ditch and the Section 2IC fired M79 grenades into it. The ambush party moved 20m to S to a position from where they could dominate the area. They were joined by the rest of the pl which had moved from its NDP. A sweep was immediately carried out locating 3 enemy bodies. Another sweep the next morning found one more. One Aust was slightly wided upper left shoulder, by shrapnel from M79 Blast. Claymores were unable to be used because their detonation wires had been cut by gun fire. 3 AK47 and 1 RPG-2 were captured.

Operation: Pinnaroo Equip Failure: _____ Mine Incid: _____

Unit Task: Ambush Ambush: _____ Mine Type: _____

SA Used: _____ ATF Claymore Amb: _____ Mine KIA: _____

En Mine Amb: _____ Mine WIA: _____

Bkr En Less Than 6: _____ Bkr En Greater than 5 No Spt Fire: _____ Mine KIA Total: 113

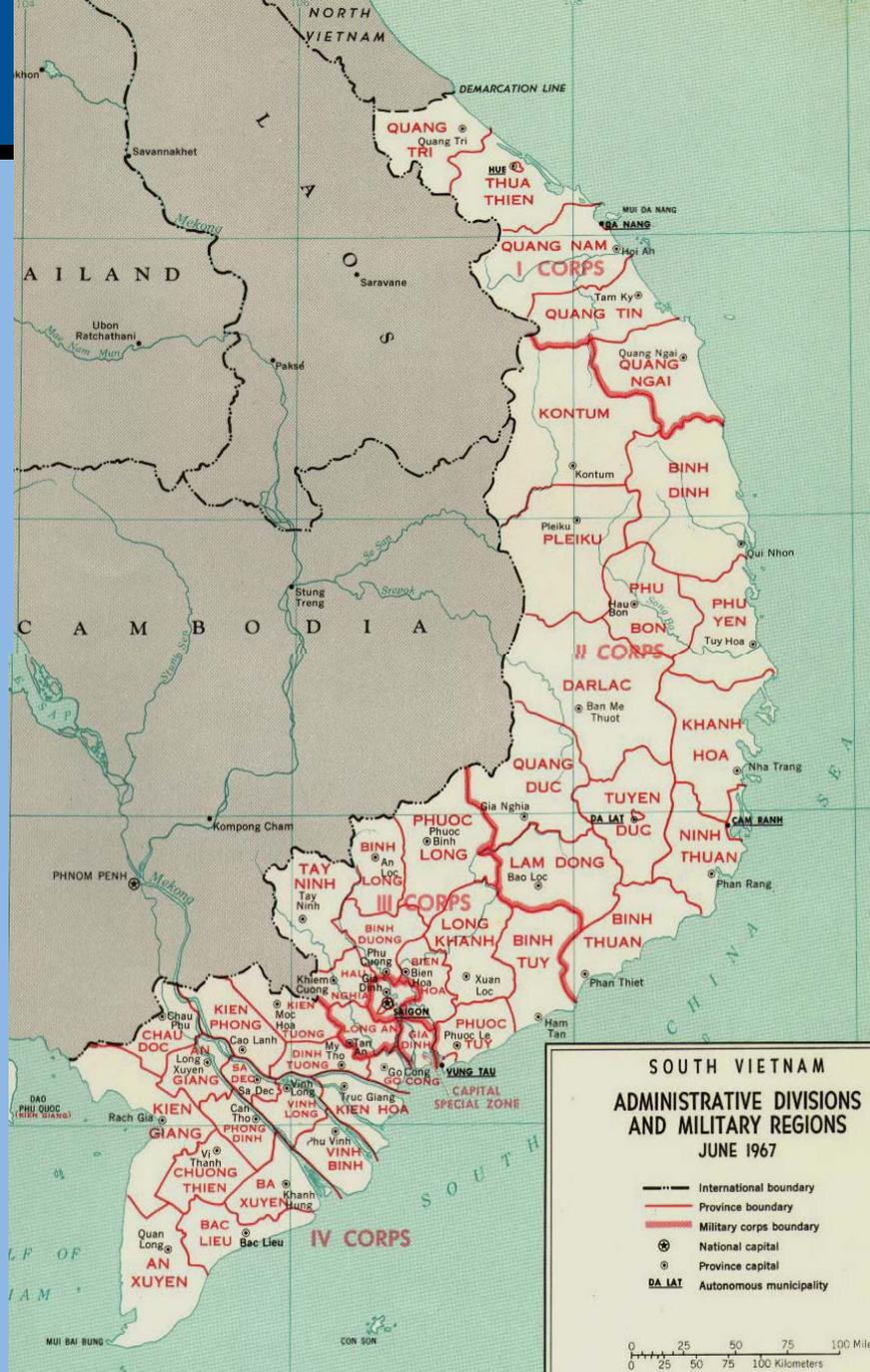
Bkr Arty Air Involved: _____ Bkr AFY Involved: _____ Mine WIA Total: 686

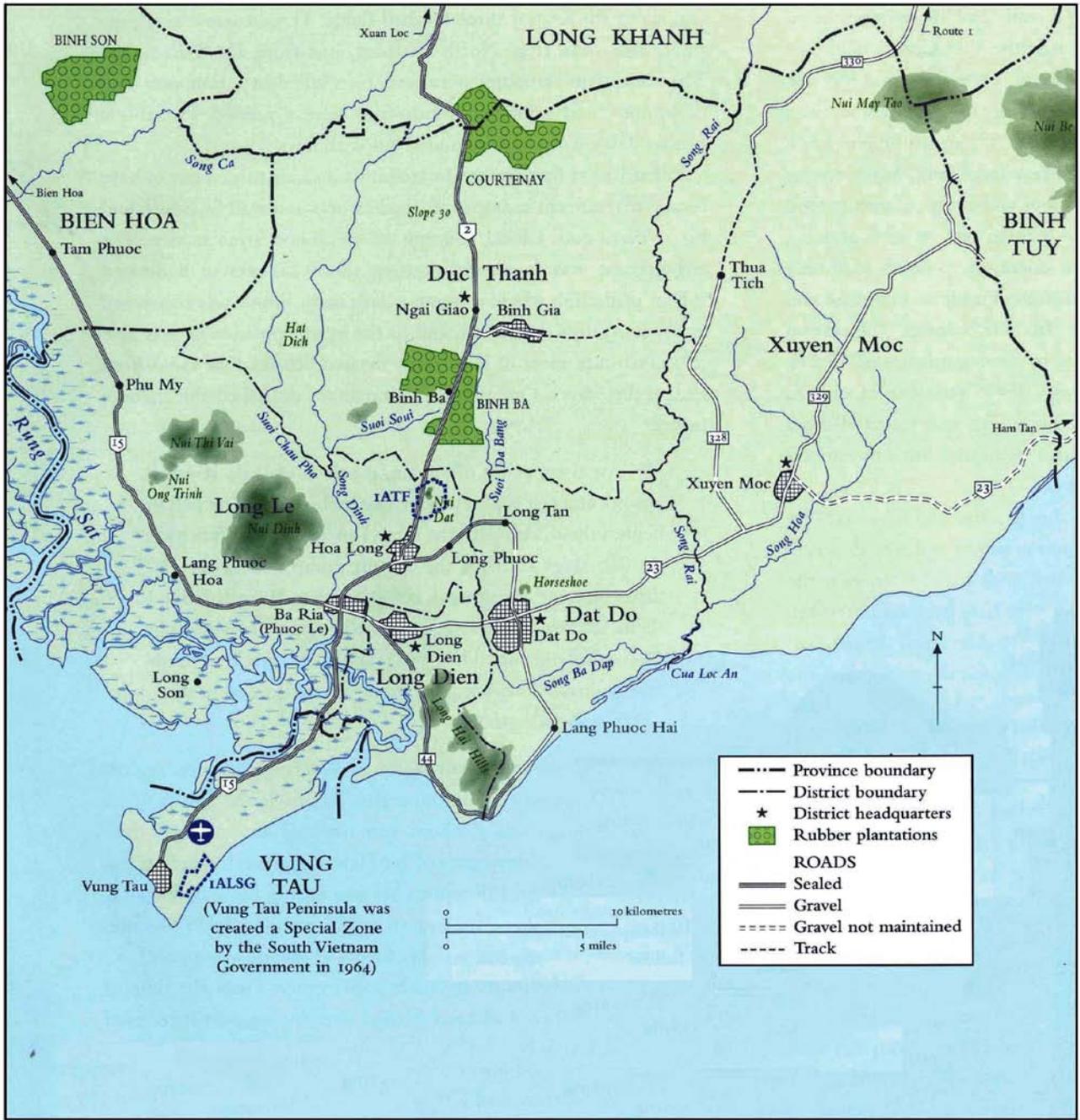
General Engag: _____ Arty Incid: _____ LFTAir Incid: _____ Mines Civilian: _____

Urban Engag: _____ Friendly Fire: _____

M60	400	M60 ammo Total	512944	M79	13	M79 ammo Total	8778
M16	170	M16 ammo Total	223970	M72	0	M72 ammo Total	235
SLR	200	SLR ammo Total	170904	M26	3	M26 ammo Total	1838
SAAs	770	SAAs ammo Total	907818	Claymore	0	Claymore Total	1375
SLR M16 ammo Total	394874	RCL Splintex	0	RCL Splintex Total	32		
MG30cal		Rifle Grenade					
MG50cal		M79 M72 M26 Total	10851	Shrapnel ammo Total	12226		

100% Browse



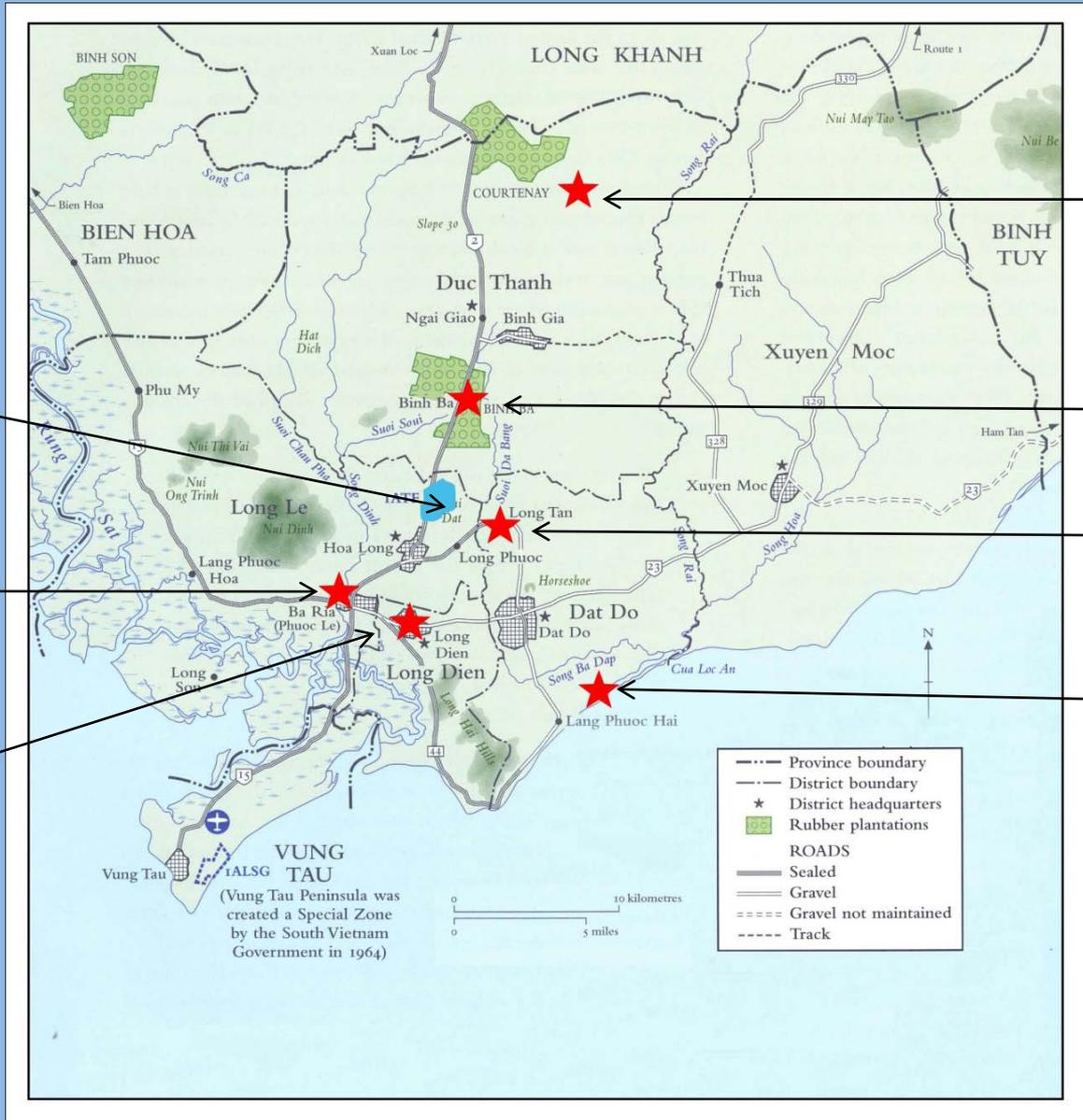


The 'big battles' (or 'landmark' battles)

- Battle of Long Tan: 18 Aug 66
- Operation Bribie: 17 Feb 67
- Battles of Tet '68: Baria, Long Dien
- Battles of FSB Coral
- Battles of FSB Balmoral
- Battle of Binh Ba: 6-7 June 69
- Battle of Nui Le: 21 Sep 71

Characteristics of the 'big battles'

- All are initiated by the People's Army
- Light infantry versus 'Combined Arms Team'
- Large People's Army casualties
- Strong tendency to 'stay and fight'
- Few in number
- Strong tendency towards 'luring the tiger from the jungle'
- Planned over a long period
- Strong tendency towards achieving surprise
- All seek a political as well as military result



Nui Le
21 Sep '71

Binh Ba
6-7 Jun '69

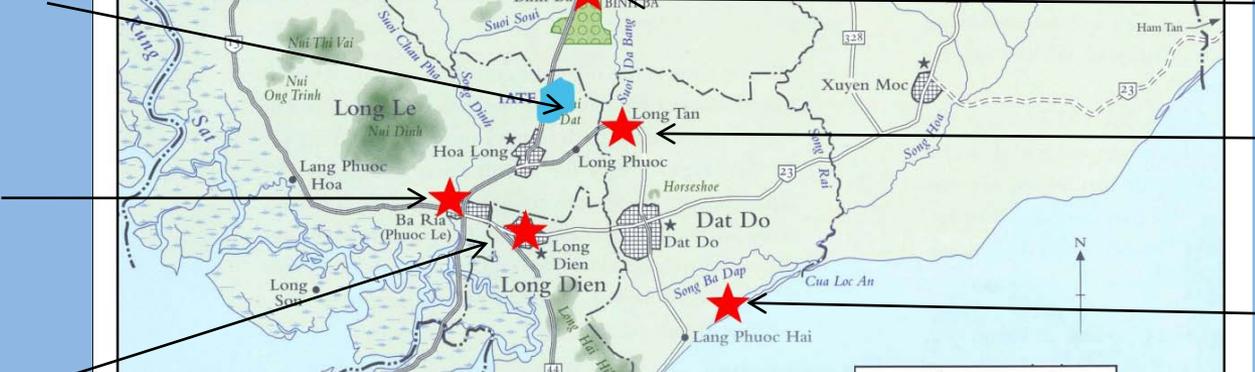
Long Tan
18 Aug '66

Op Bribie
17 Feb '67

1 ATF –
NUI DAT

Baria
Tet '68

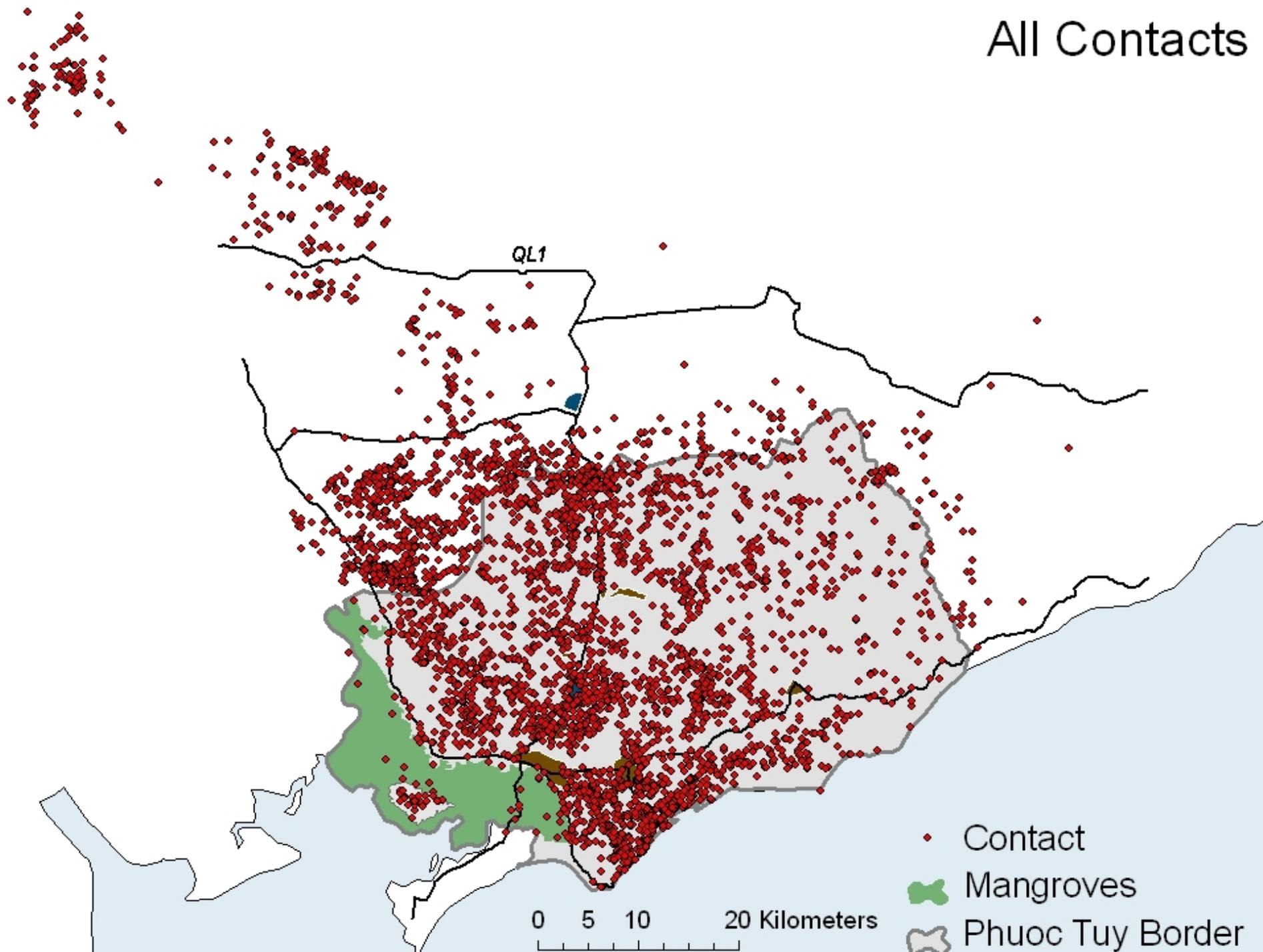
Long Dien
Tet '68

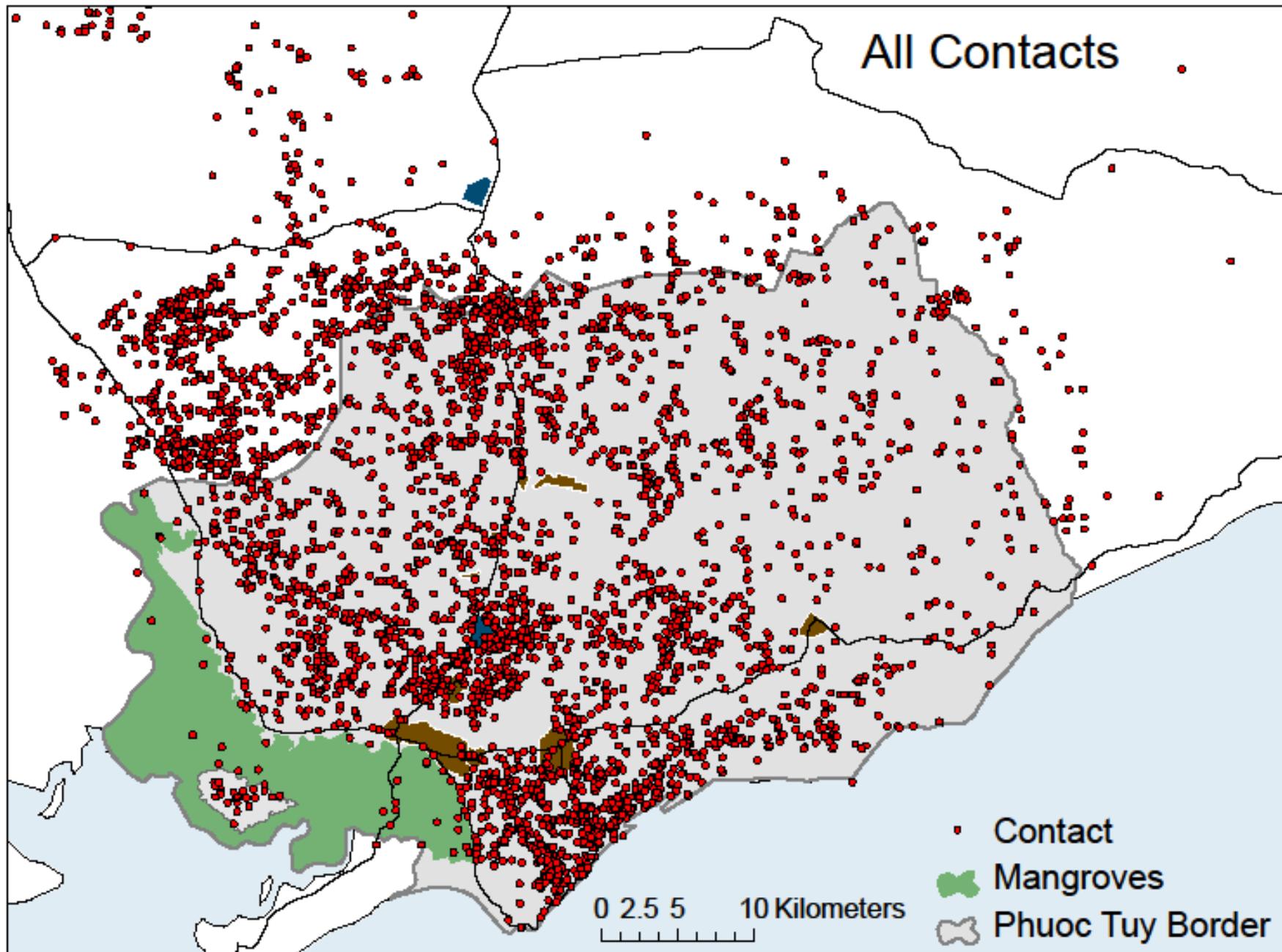


Characteristics of the 'little battles' (contacts)

- Overwhelmingly initiated by 1ATF
- Short range and short duration
- Overwhelmingly light infantry against light infantry
- Small numbers of troops involved
- Overwhelmingly the PAVN prefer to avoid these battles and they seek to break contact
- Two-thirds are ambushes or patrol encounters
- Either neutral or negative political value to the enemy
- Very large numbers of contacts (approx 3900)

All Contacts





All Contacts

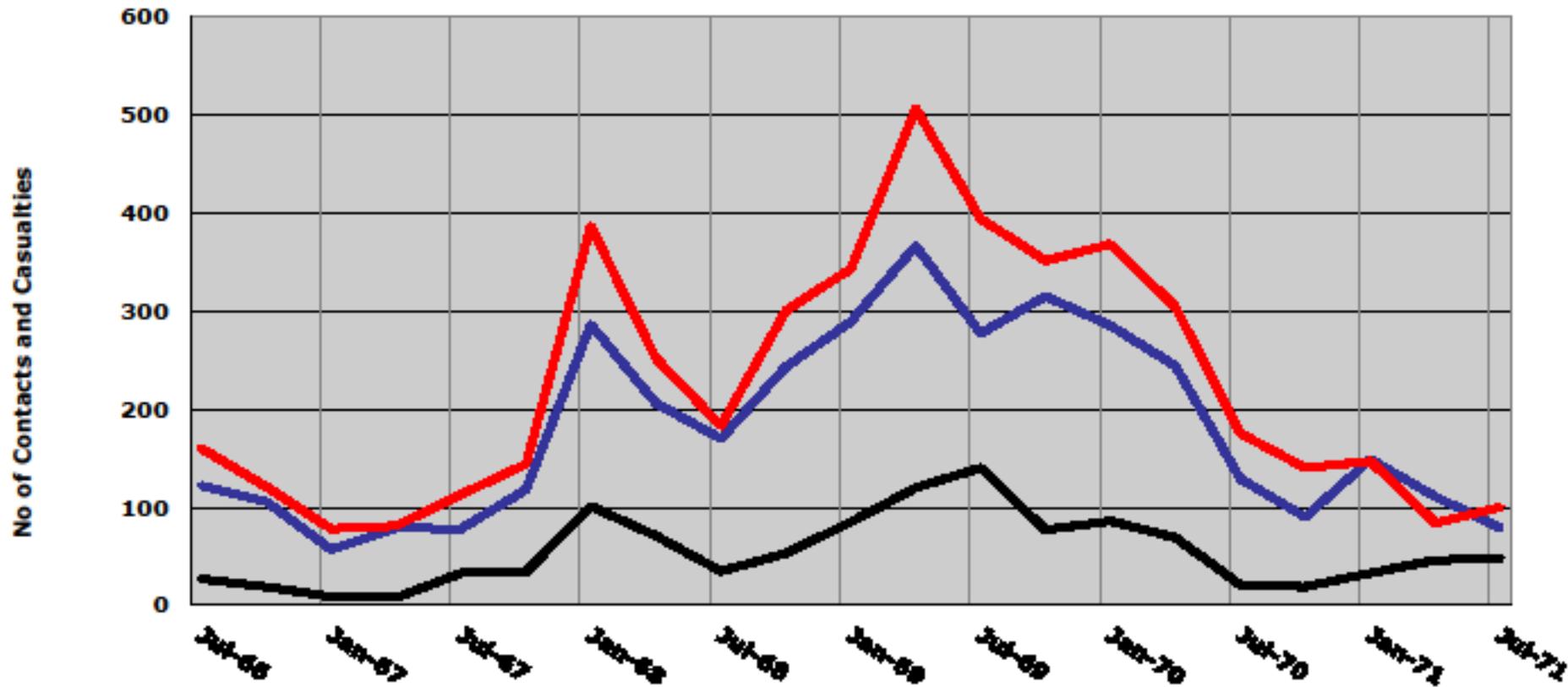
- Contact
- Mangroves
- Phuoc Tuy Border

0 2.5 5 10 Kilometers

U.S. forces and 1ATF compared

Type of contact	Frequency	
	U.S. Army %	1ATF %
Ambush (by enemy)	23.3	2
Ambush (of enemy)	8.7	34
Attack on enemy position	17.9	8
Defence of position	30.4	20
'Hot' landing zone	12.5	insignificant
Patrol Encounter	7.1	36

1ATF Contacts and Associated Casualties (minus General and Urban Engagements and Mine Incidents) 1966-1971



	Jul-66	Oct-66	Jan-67	Apr-67	Jul-67	Oct-67	Jan-68	Apr-68	Jul-68	Oct-68	Jan-69	Apr-69	Jul-69	Oct-69	Jan-70	Apr-70	Jul-70	Oct-70	Jan-71	Apr-71	Jul-71
No Contacts	122	106	57	79	78	118	286	206	170	243	289	366	277	315	285	244	129	90	149	111	79
En Cas	160	121	78	81	113	144	386	252	183	300	343	506	394	351	368	304	175	140	147	84	100
1ATF Cas	27	19	9	8	33	34	101	71	35	53	85	120	140	77	86	69	21	19	33	46	48

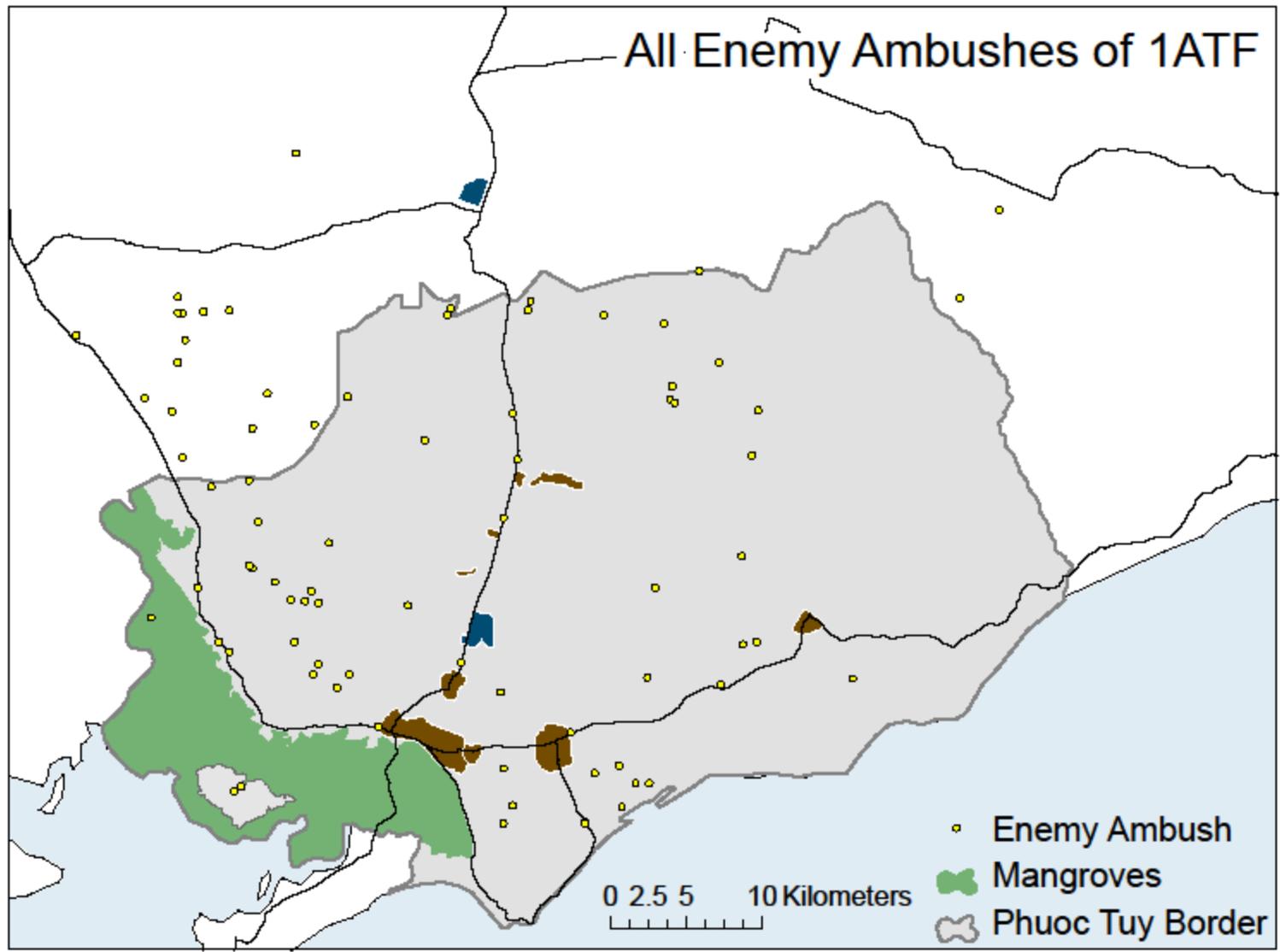
1ATF average shots per casualty by combat task and weapon type

Weapon type	Combat task			
	Patrol encounter	Ambush (of enemy)	Bunker system attack	Security or defence of position
7.62mm GPMG M60	619	495	1310	761
5.56mm M16	232	319	679	307
7.62mm SLR	187	222	517	174

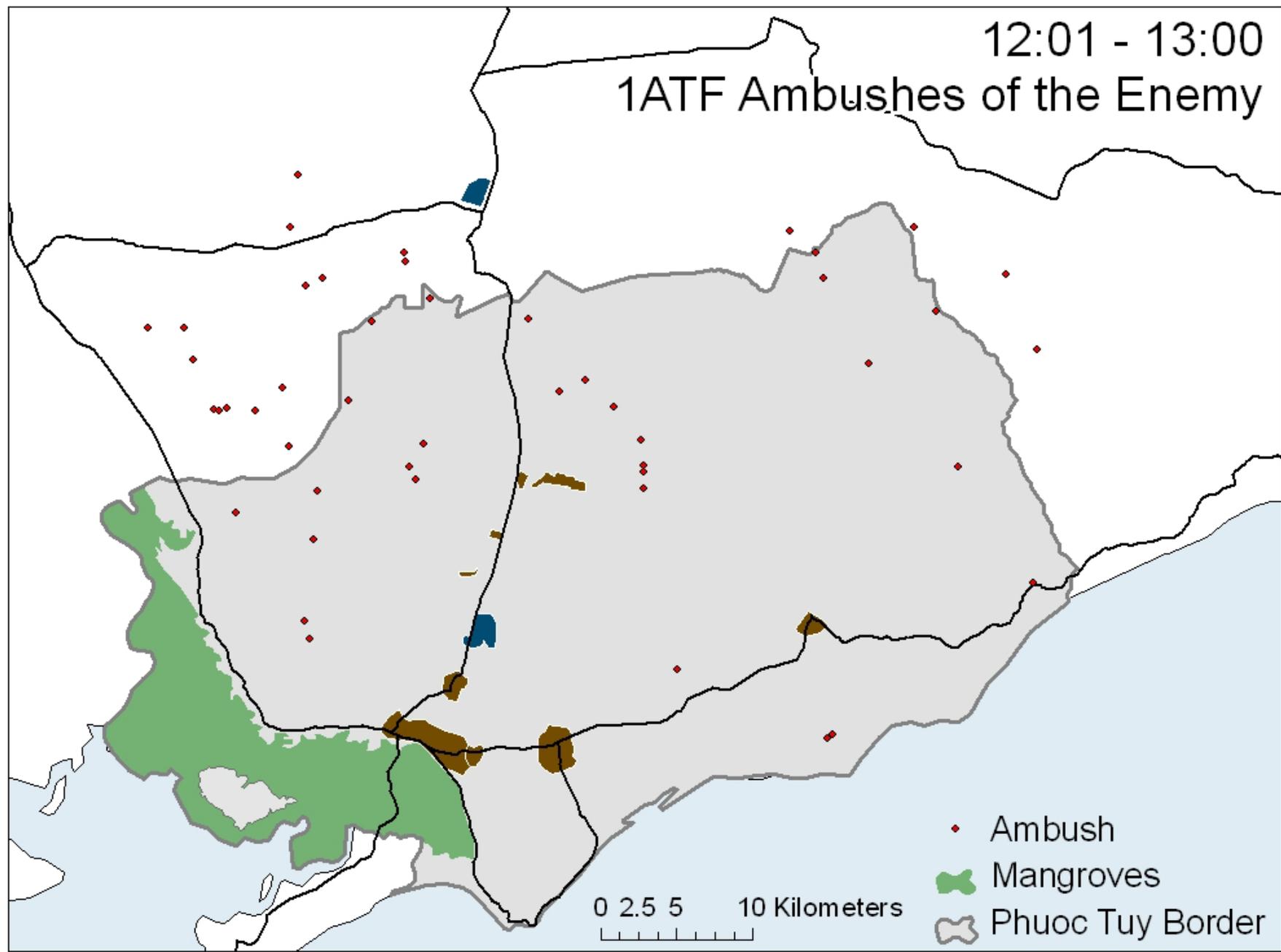
Ambushes

- 2% of 1ATF contacts were enemy ambushes of 1ATF
- 34% were 1ATF ambushes of the enemy
- 79% of 1ATF ambushes were against 6 enemy or less
- 50% were at 10 m range or less
- 1ATF infantry loss ratio = 1:10
- Enemy loss ration = 1:2.7

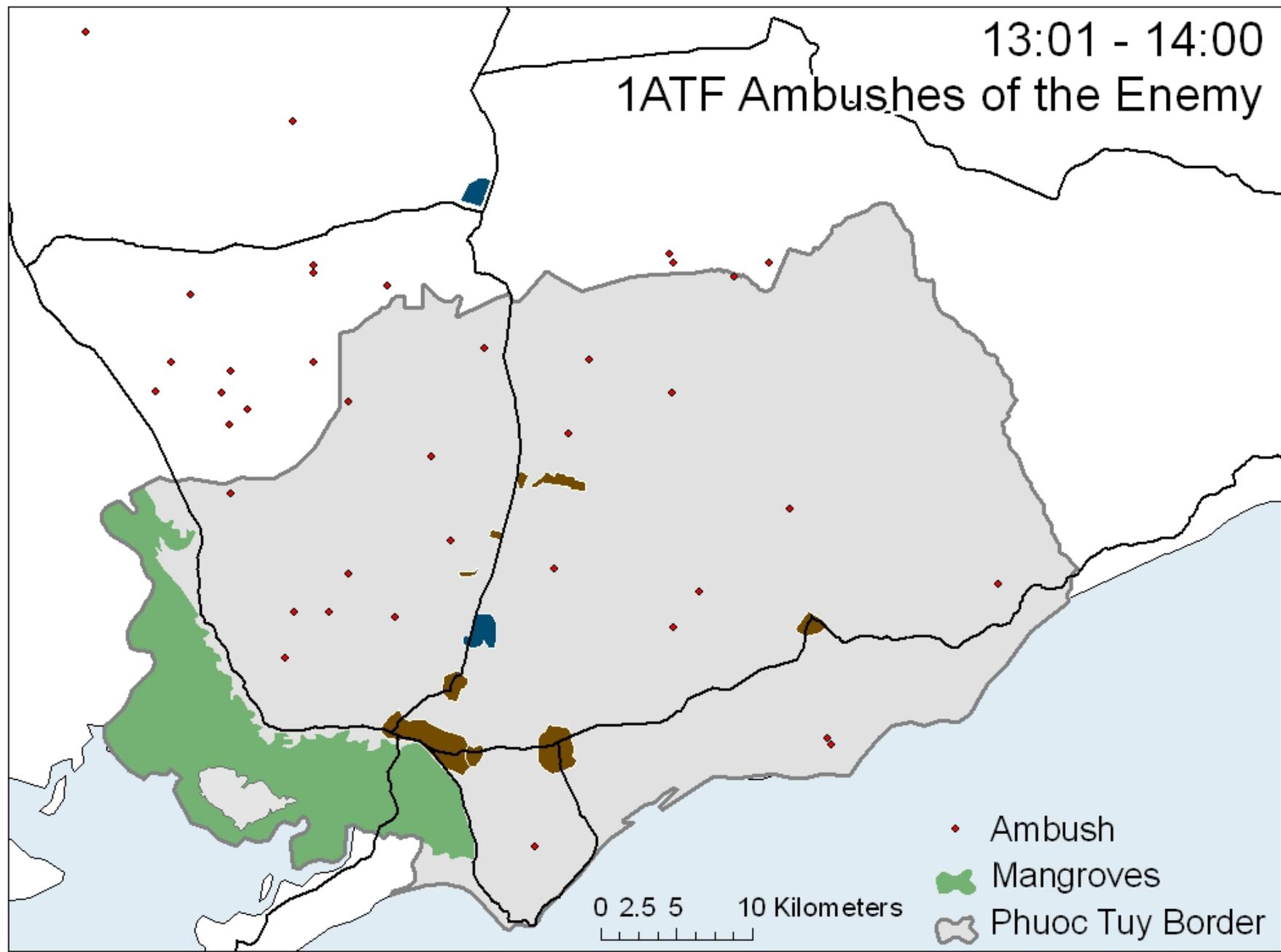
All Enemy Ambushes of 1ATF



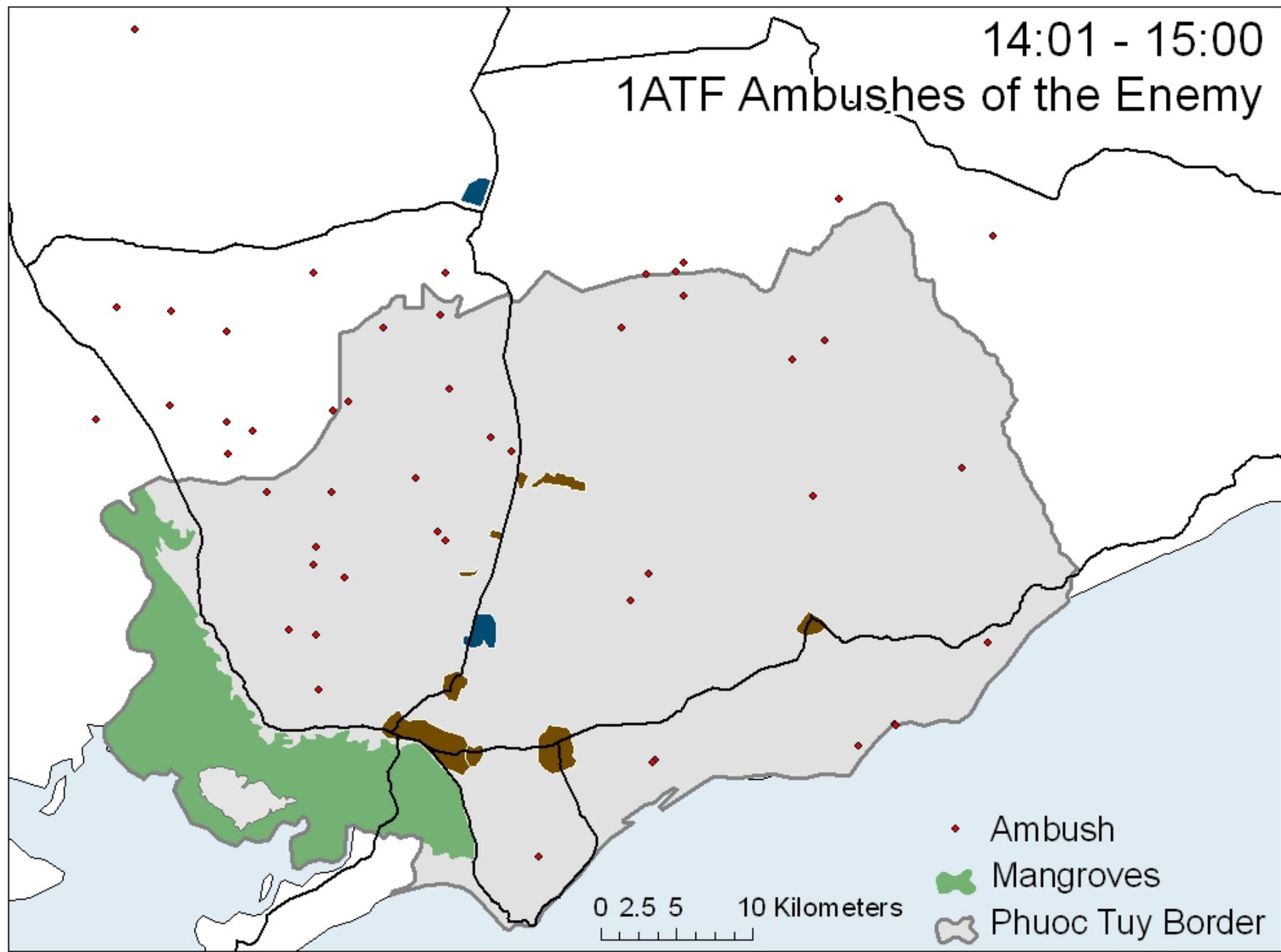
12:01 - 13:00 1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



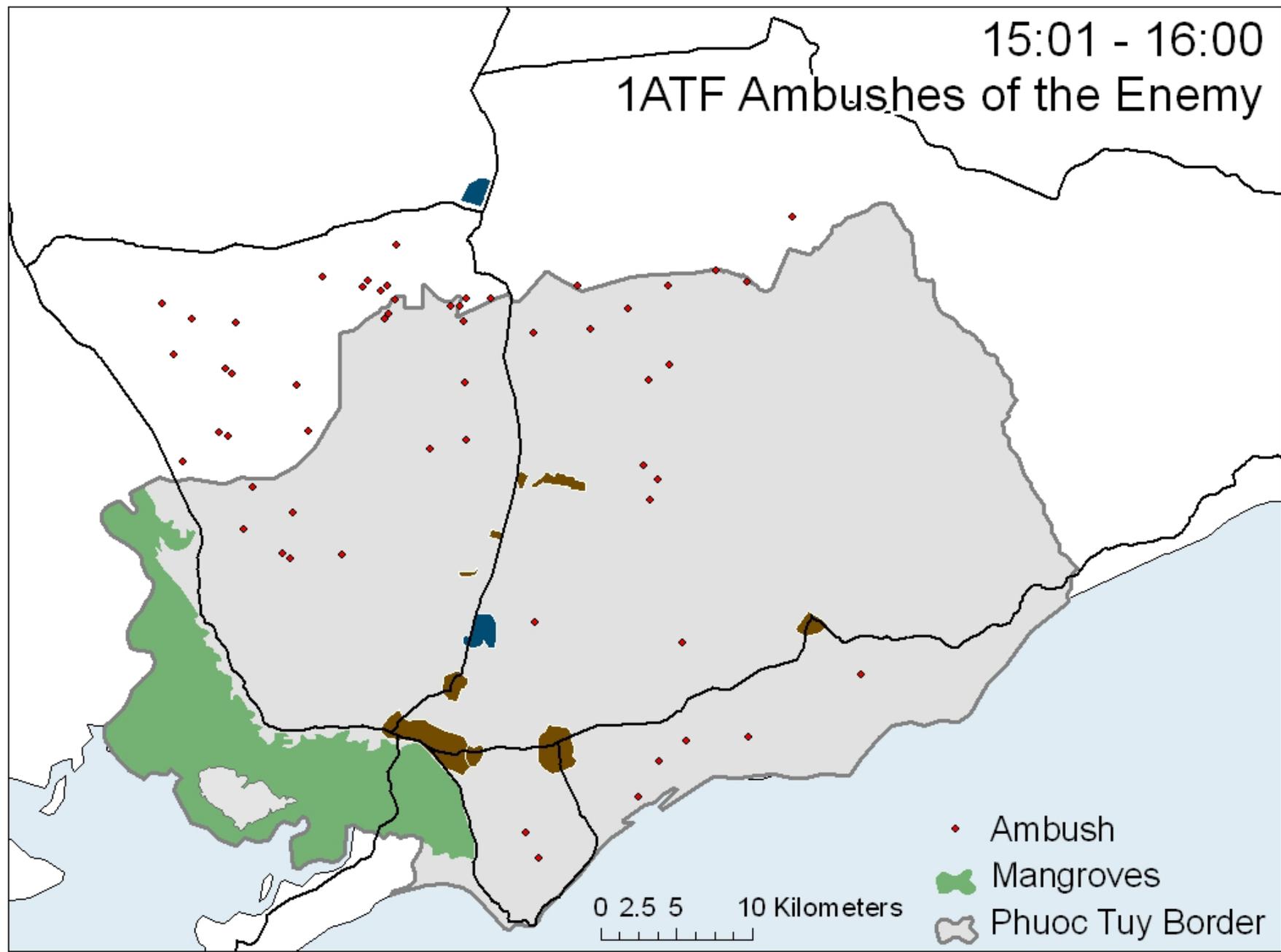
13:01 - 14:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



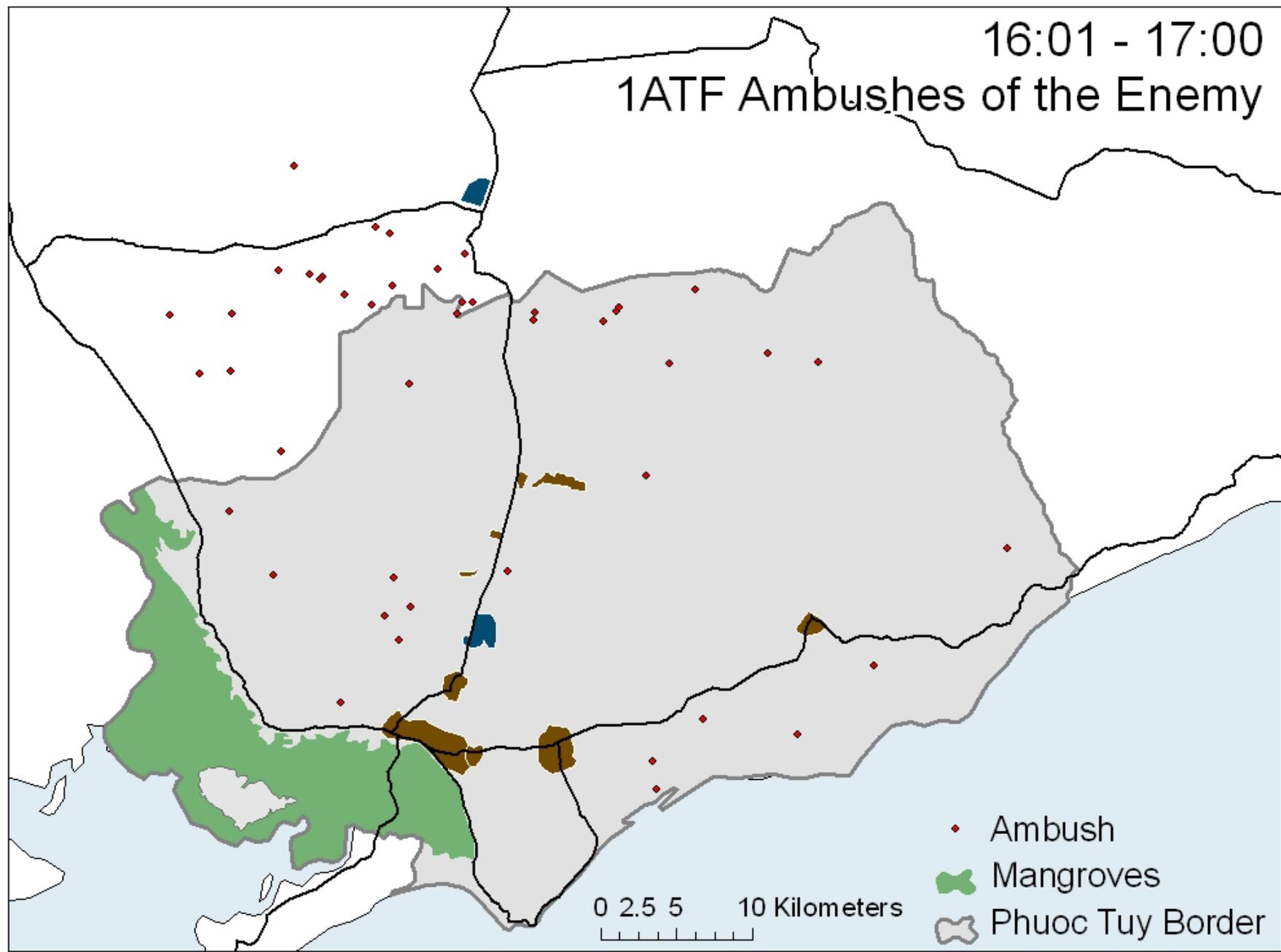
14:01 - 15:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



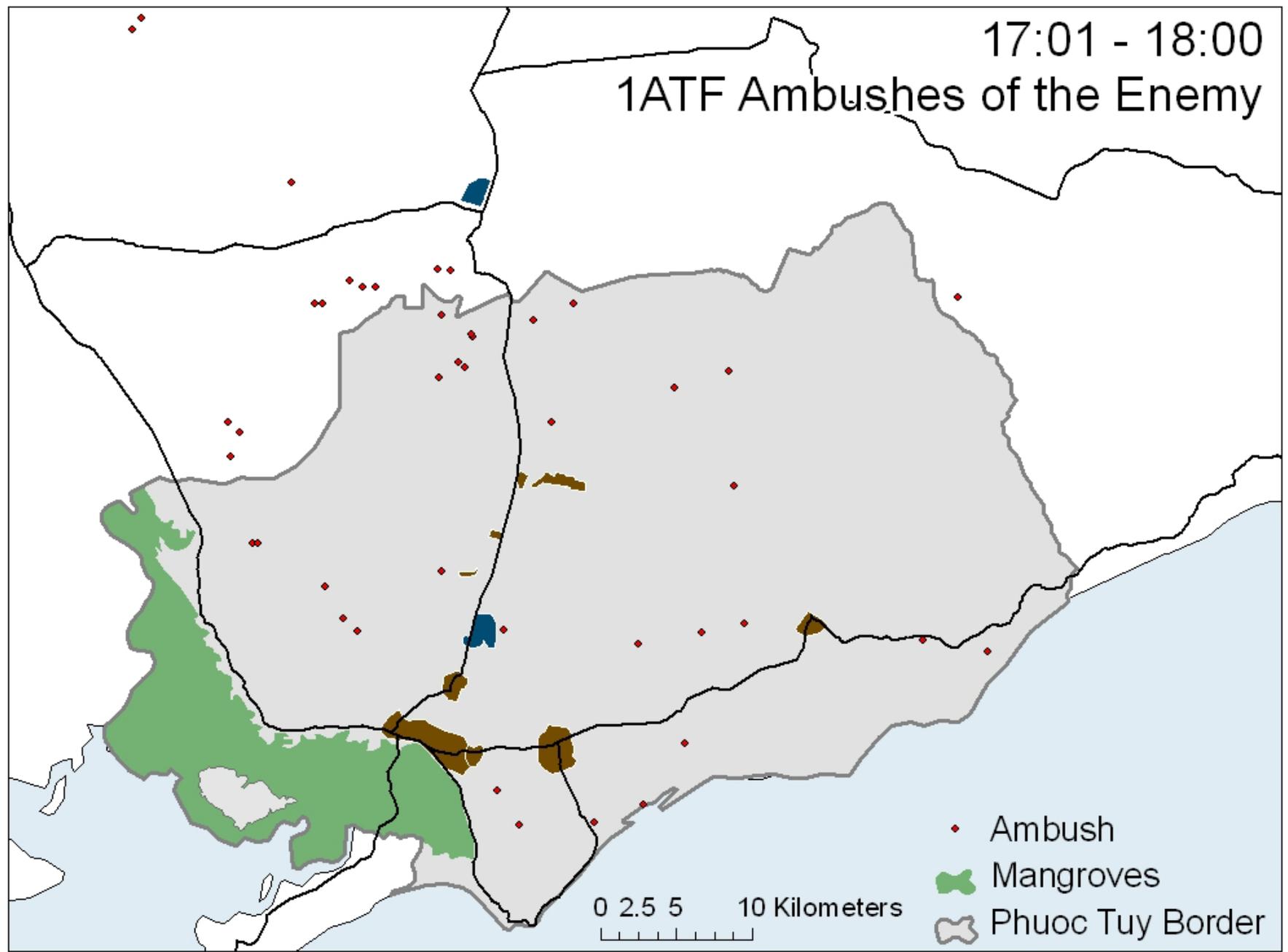
15:01 - 16:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



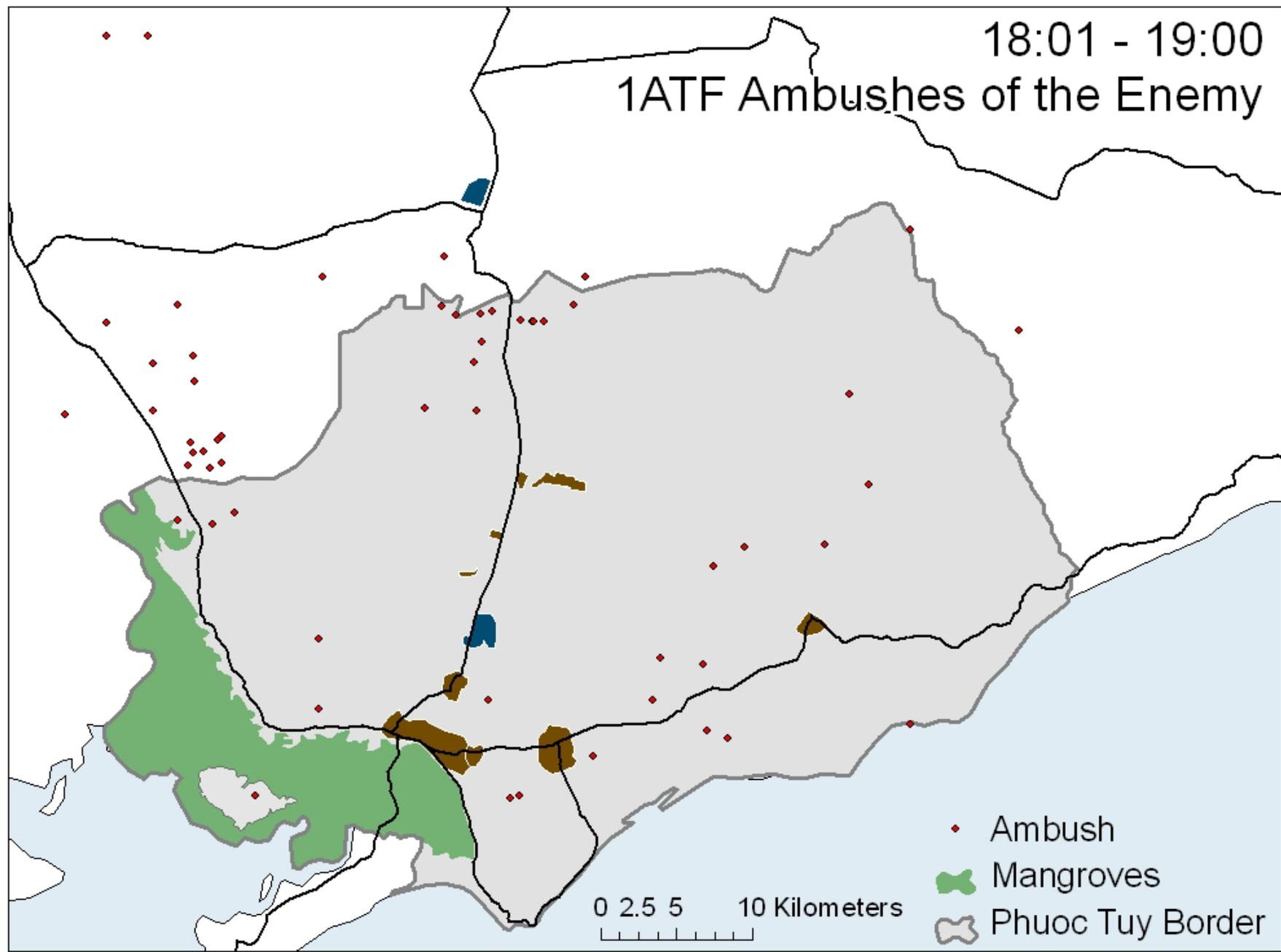
16:01 - 17:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



17:01 - 18:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



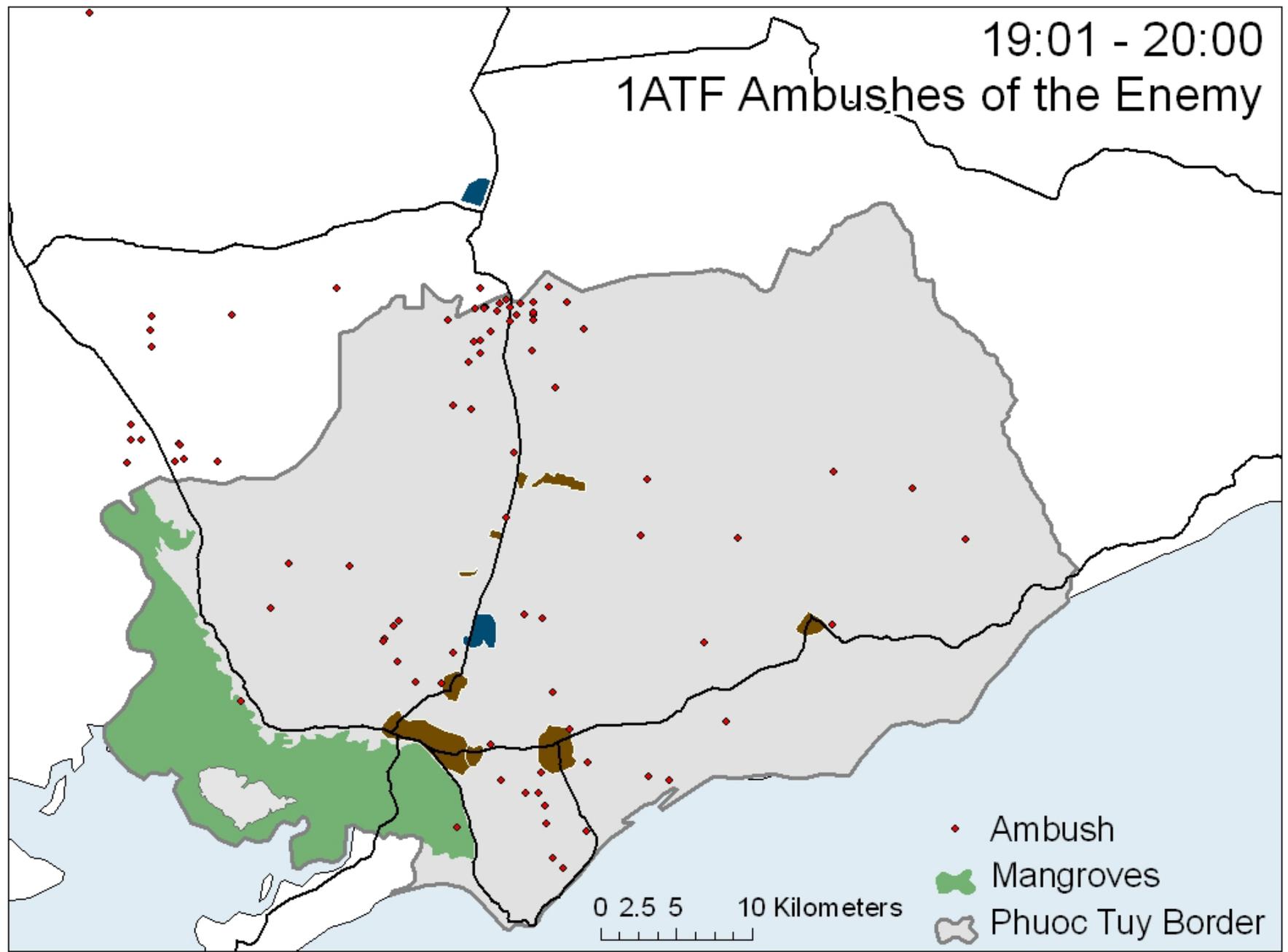
18:01 - 19:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



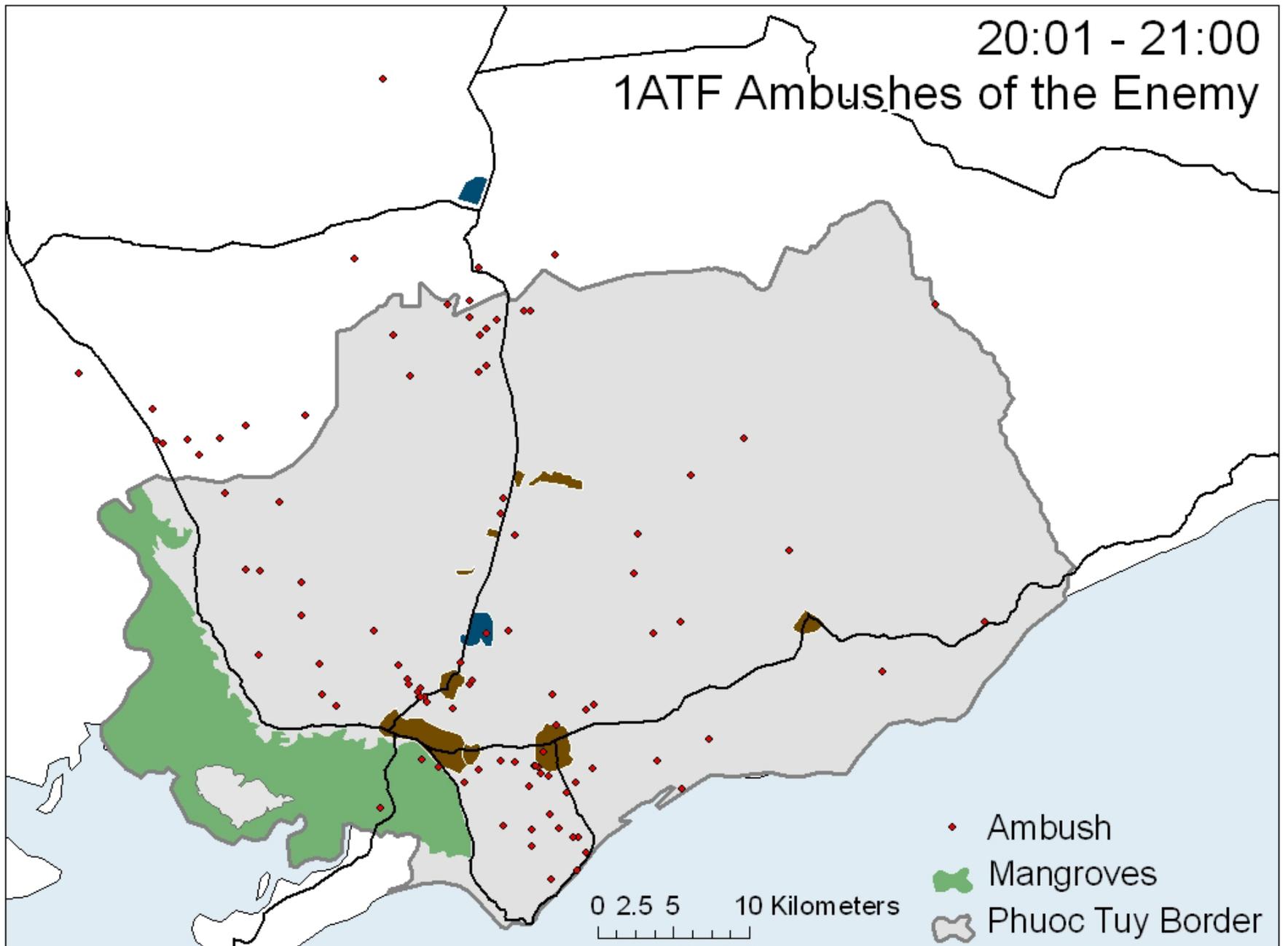
- Ambush
- Mangroves
- Phuoc Tuy Border

0 2.5 5 10 Kilometers

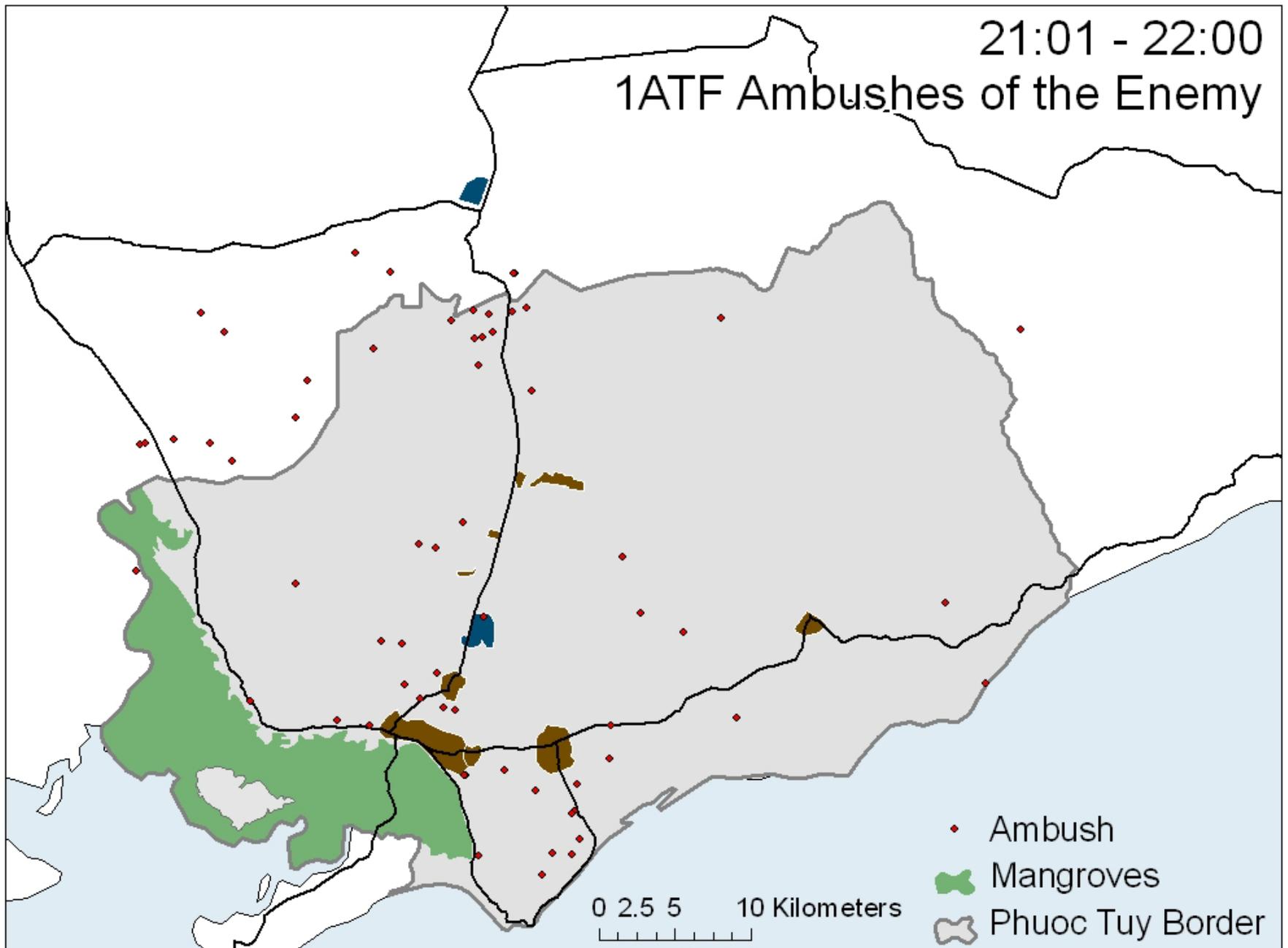
19:01 - 20:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



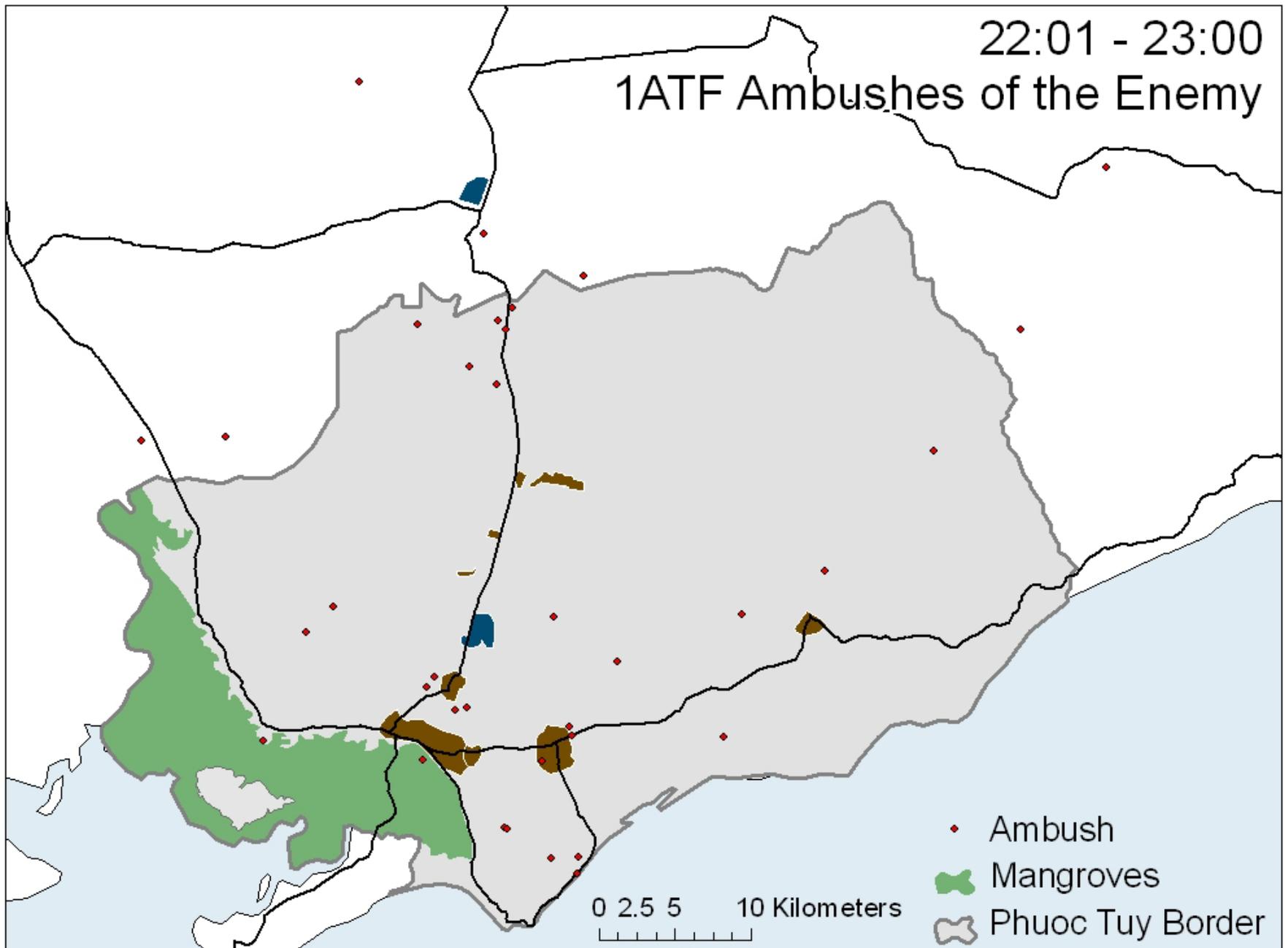
20:01 - 21:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



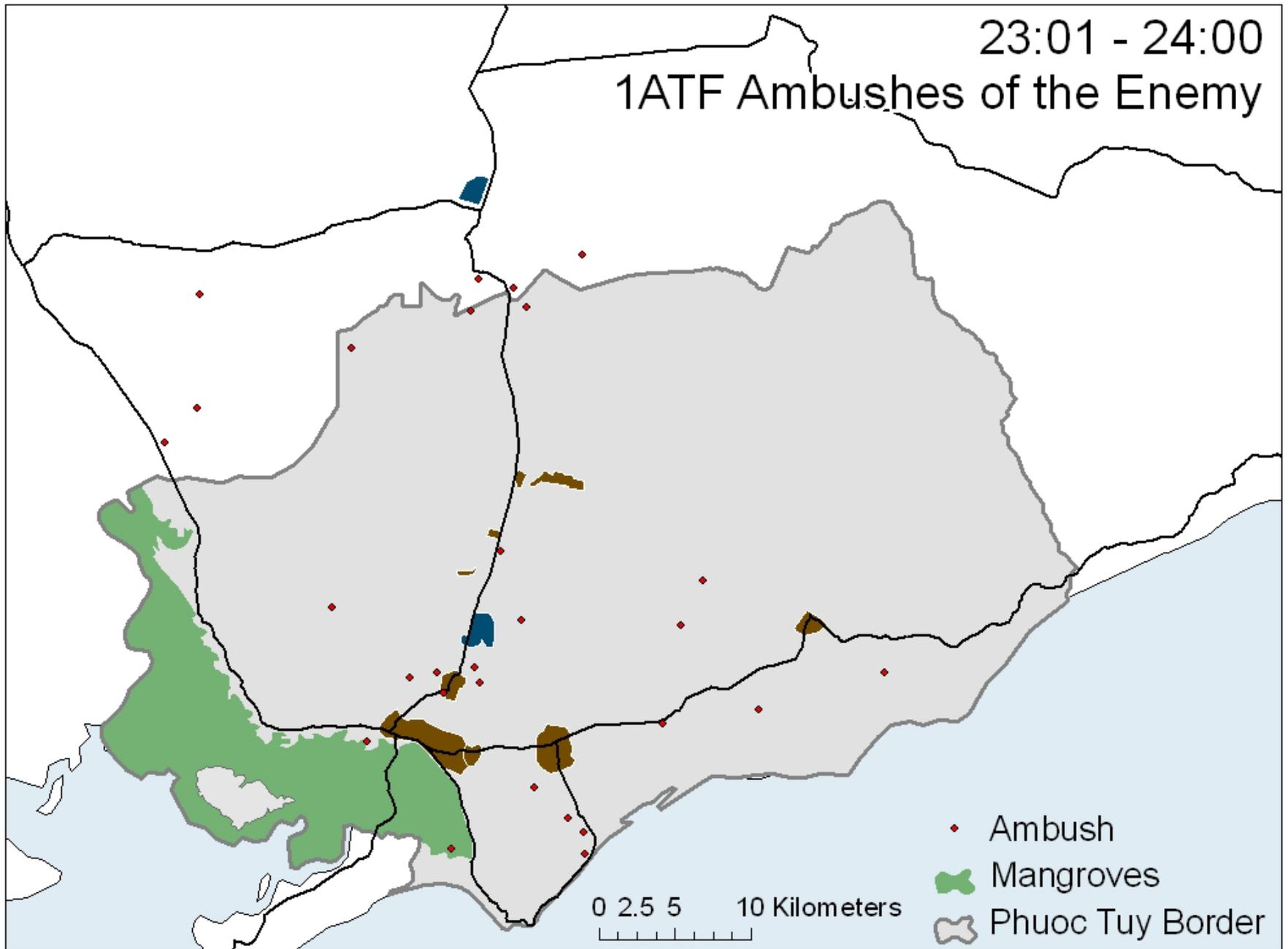
21:01 - 22:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



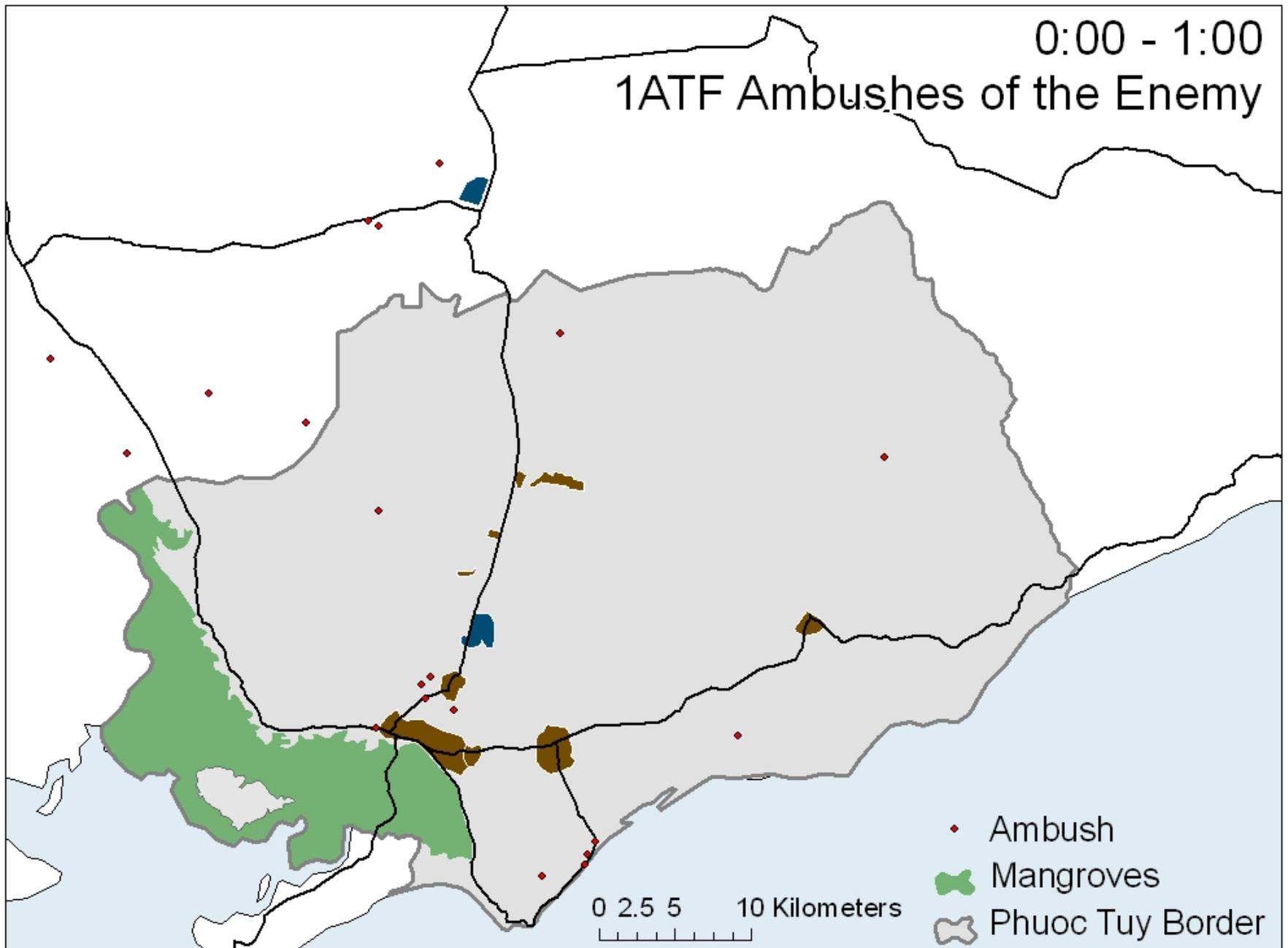
22:01 - 23:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



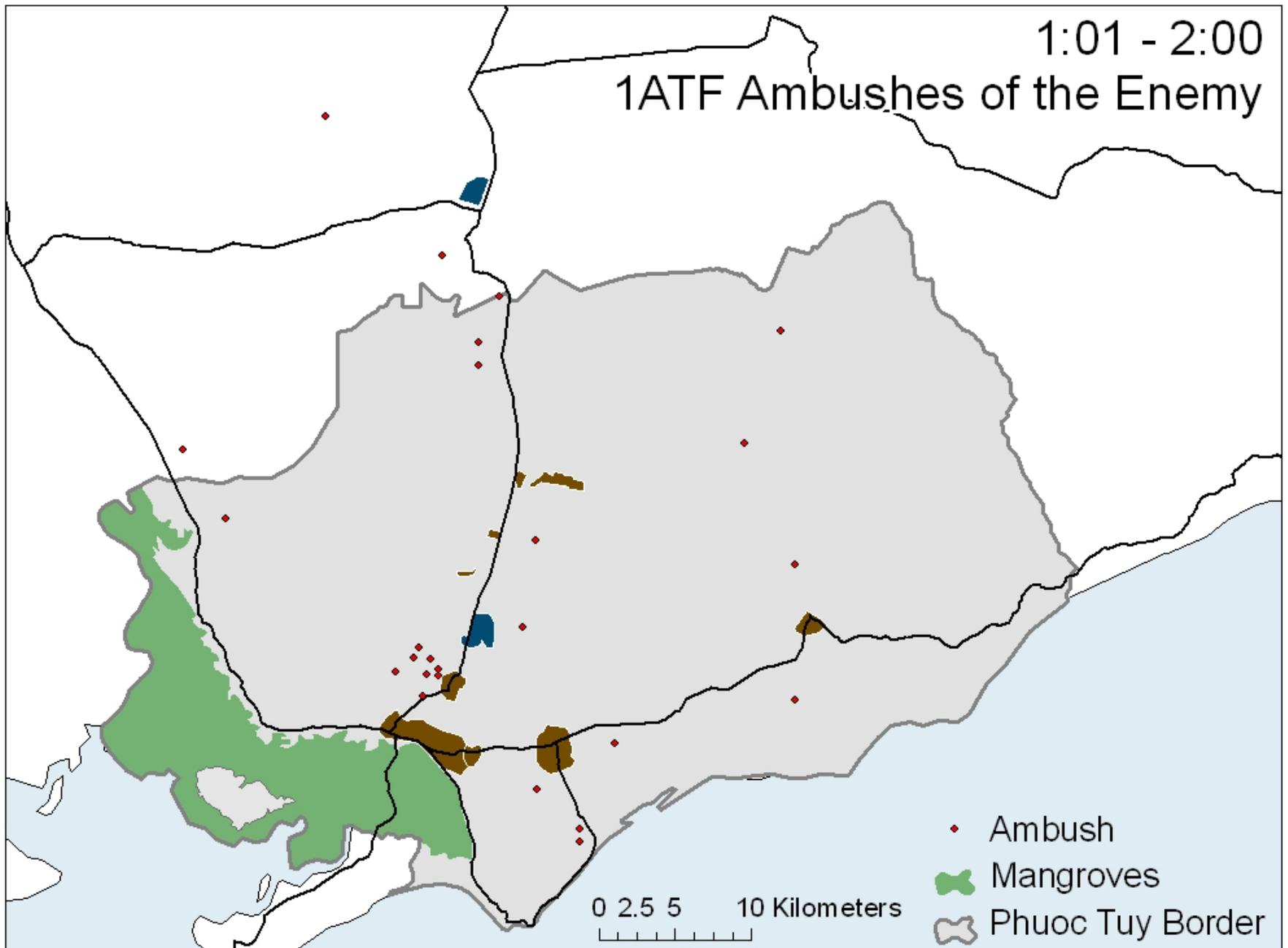
23:01 - 24:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



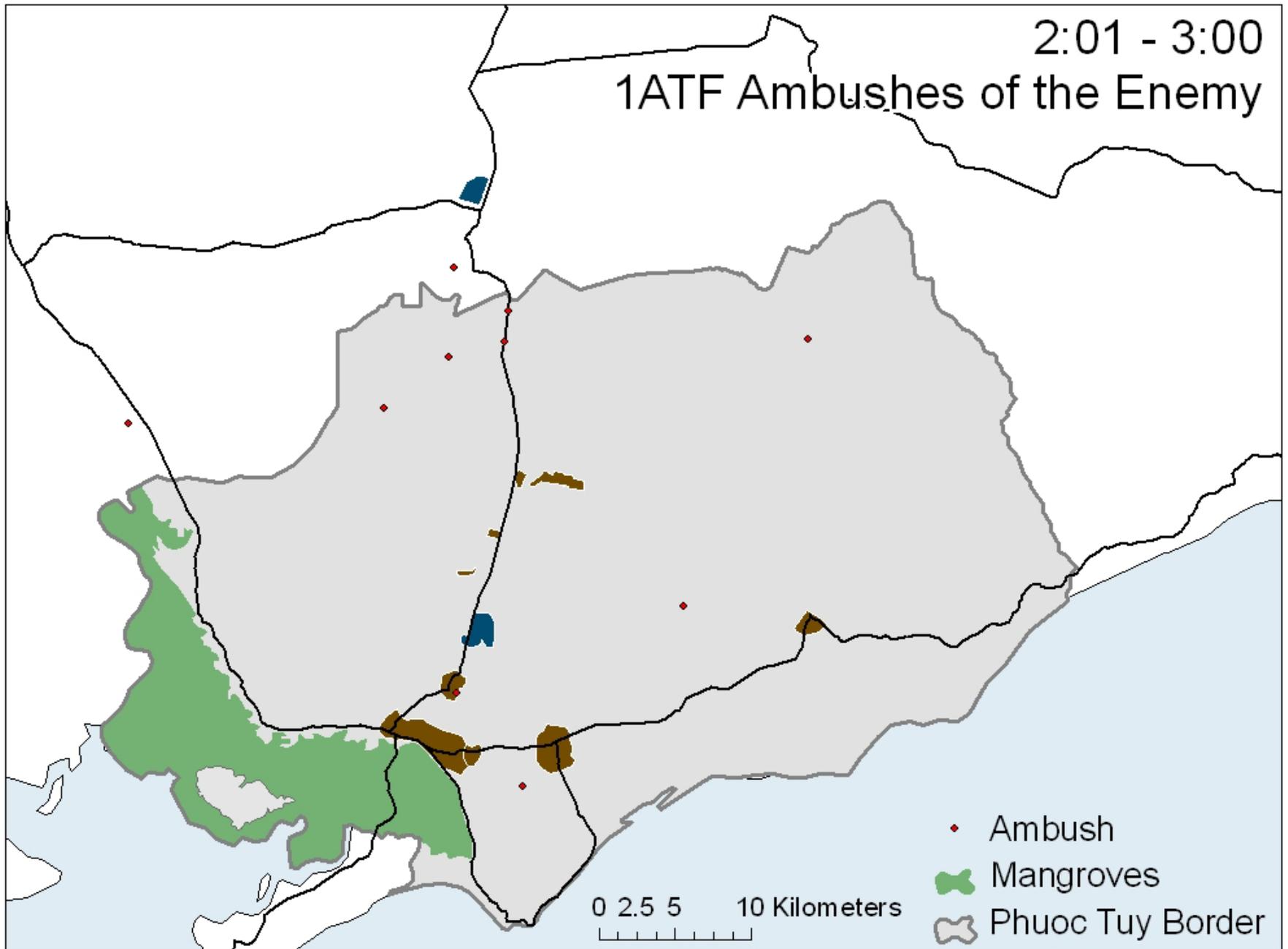
0:00 - 1:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



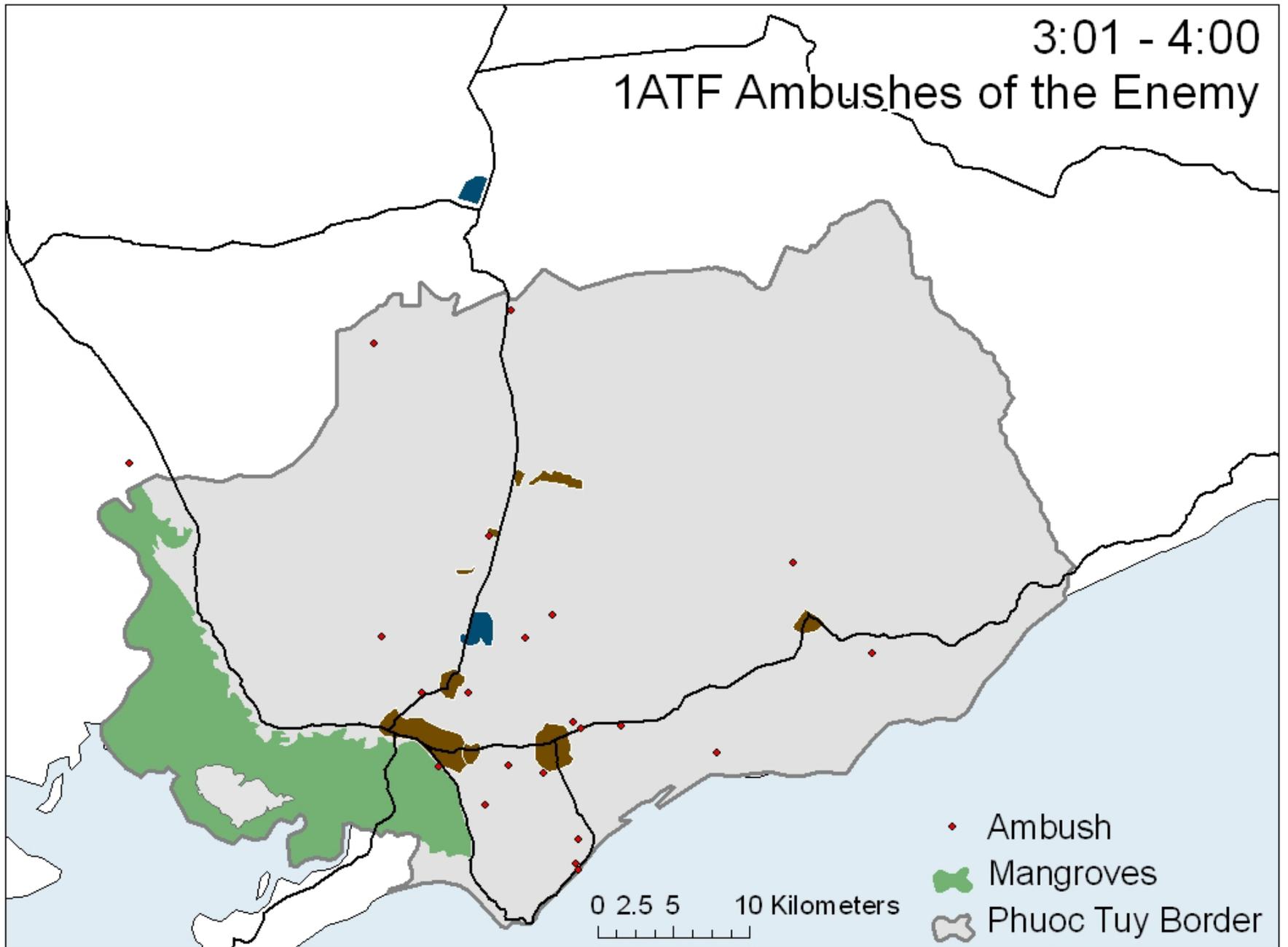
1:01 - 2:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



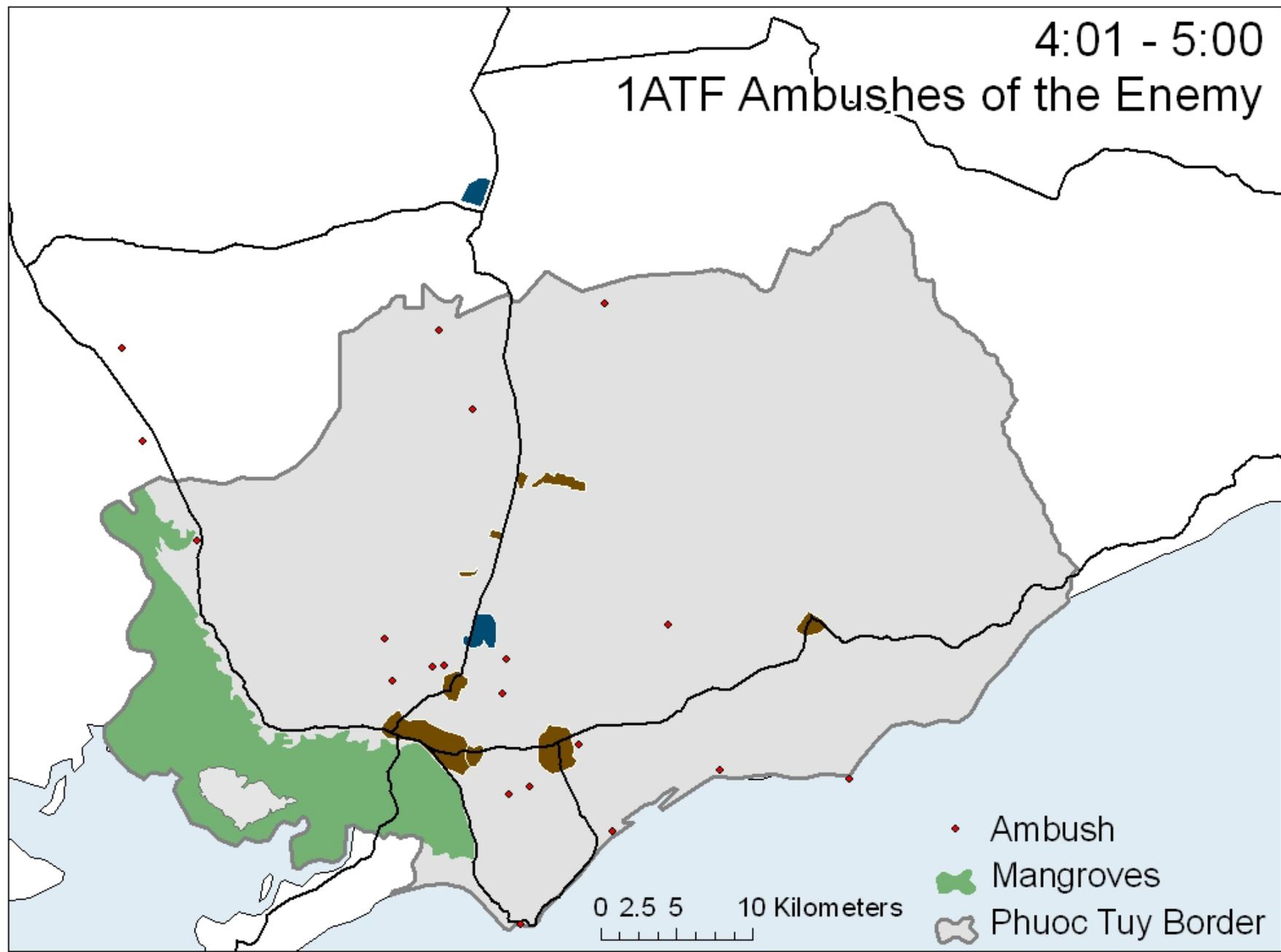
2:01 - 3:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



3:01 - 4:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



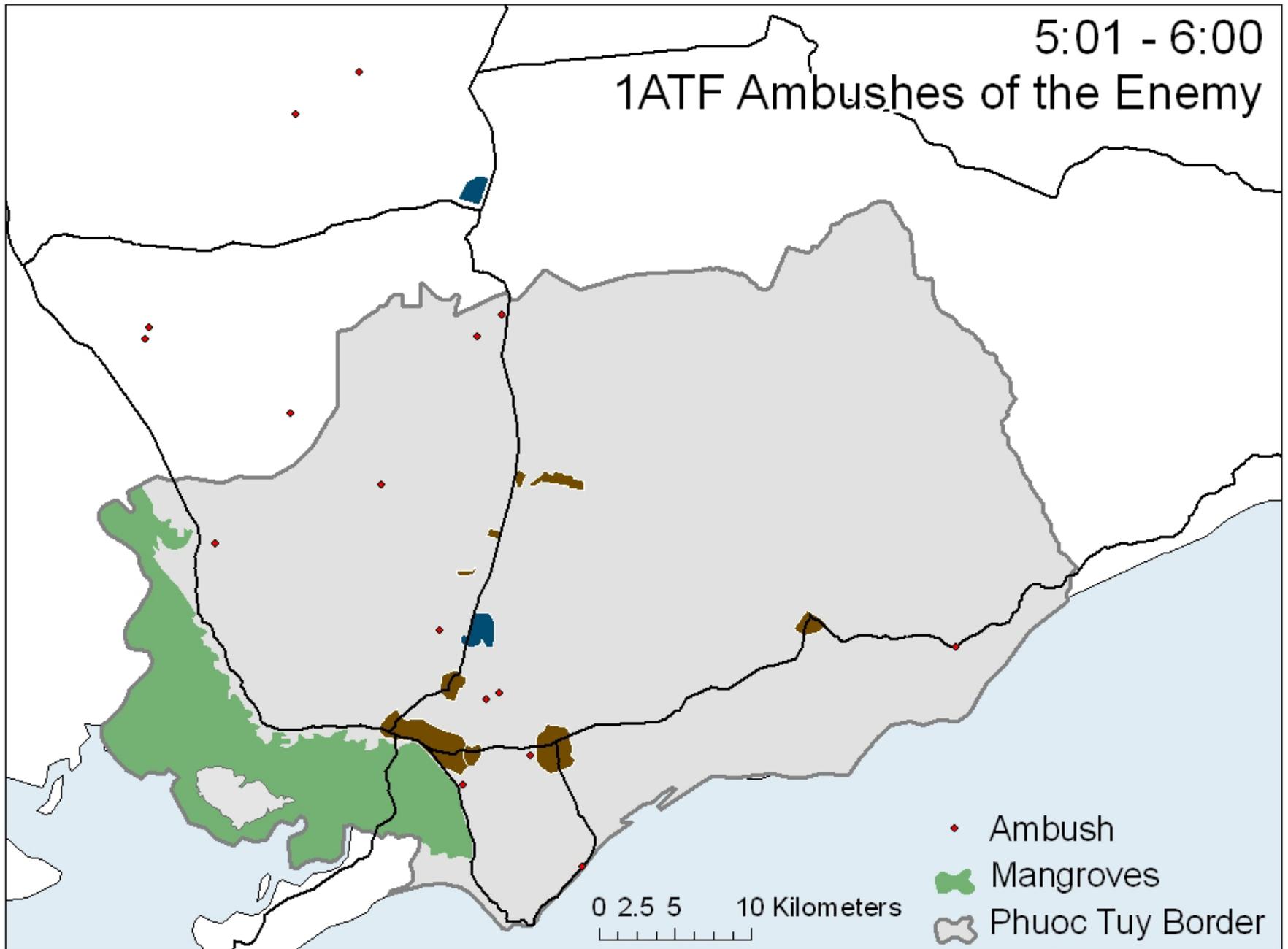
4:01 - 5:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



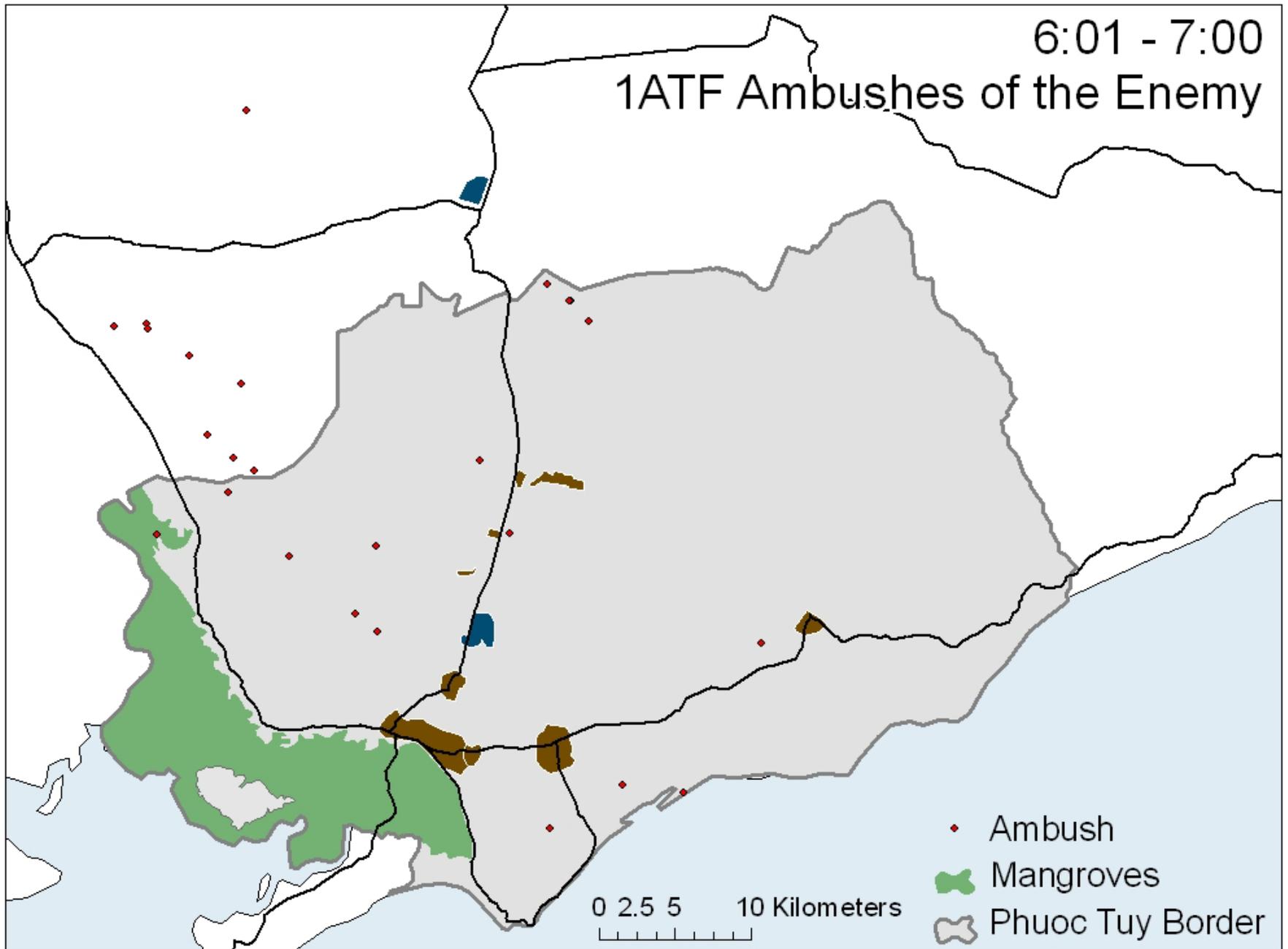
- Ambush
- Mangroves
- Phuoc Tuy Border

0 2.5 5 10 Kilometers

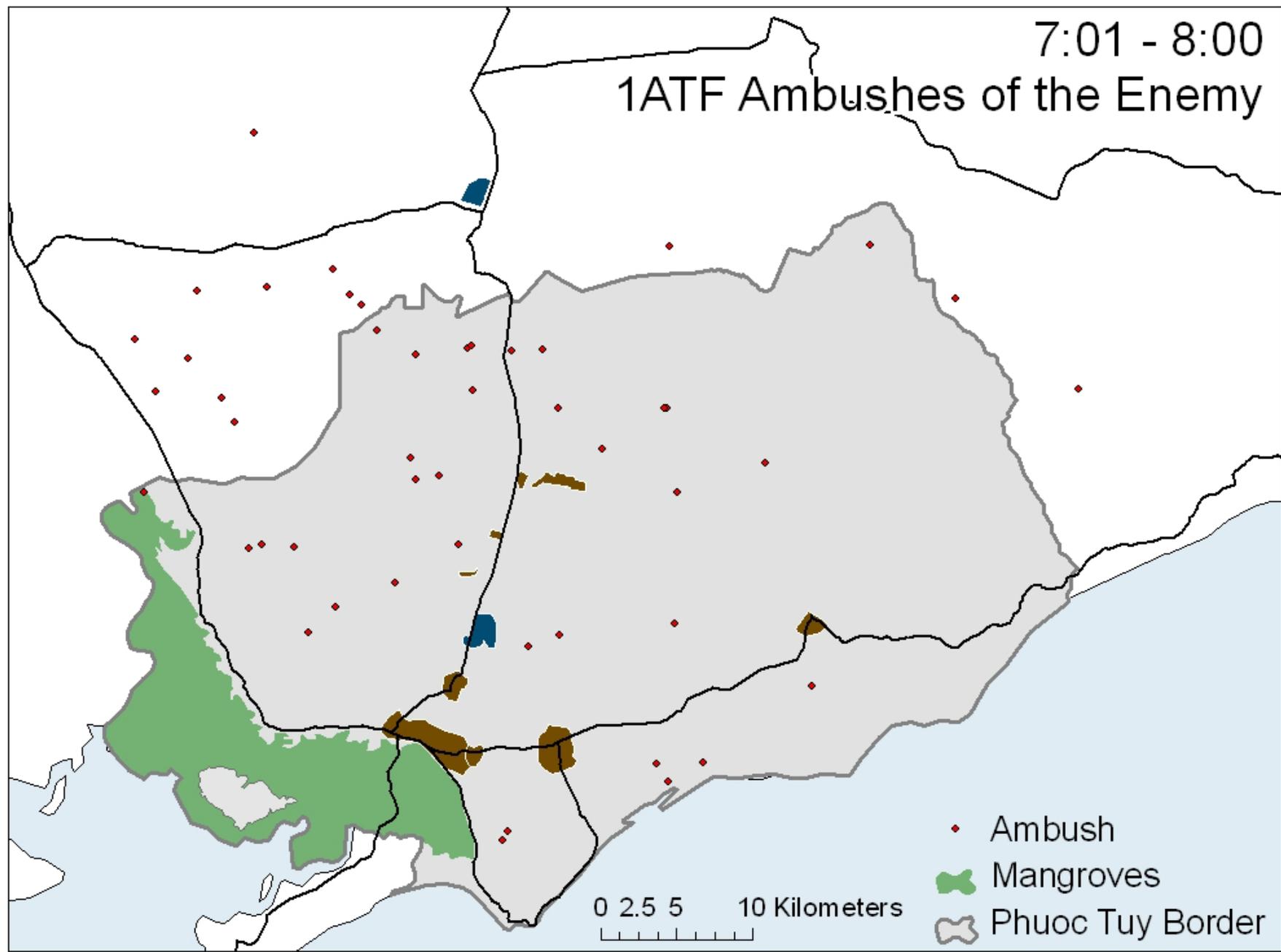
5:01 - 6:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



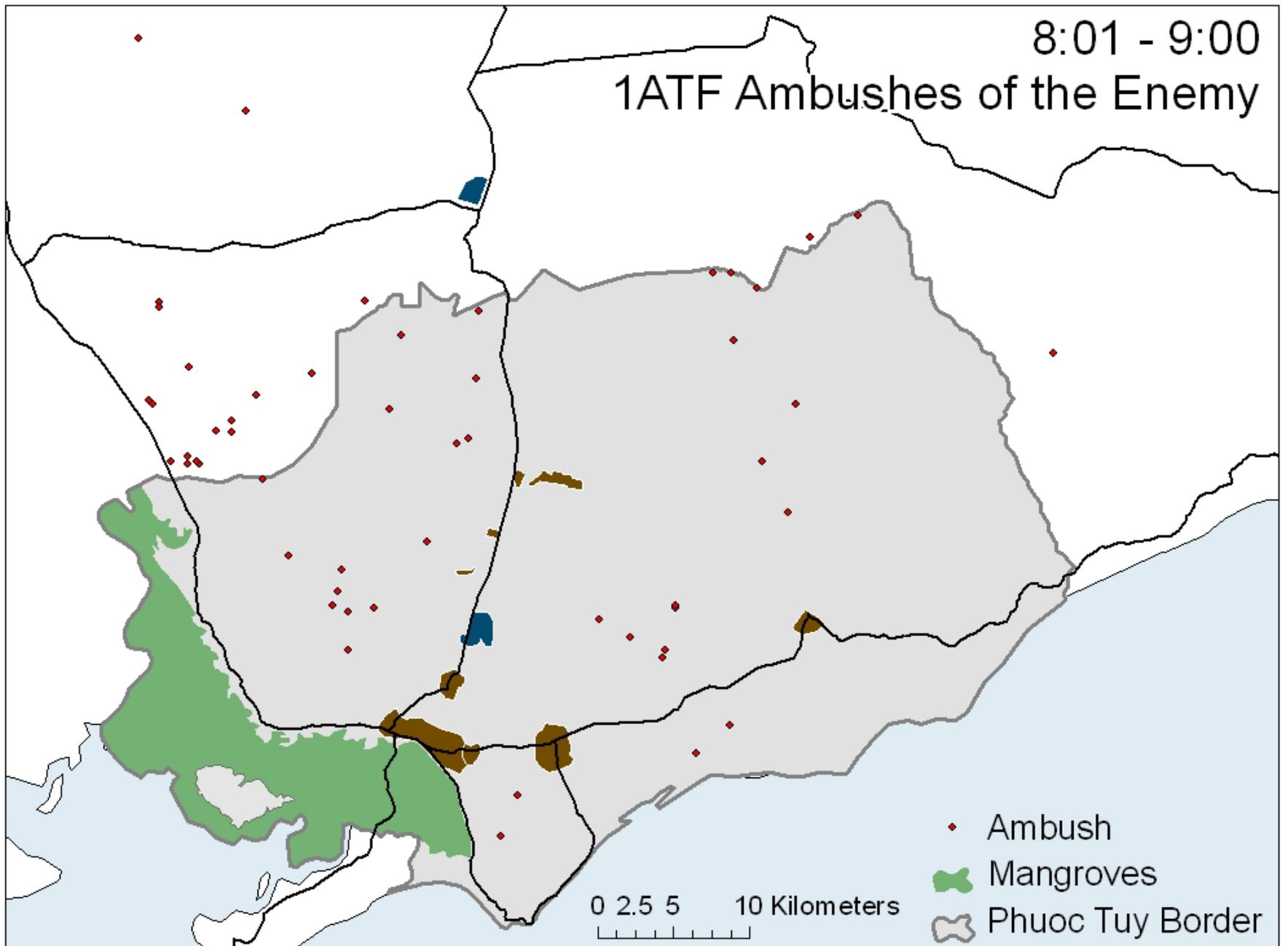
6:01 - 7:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



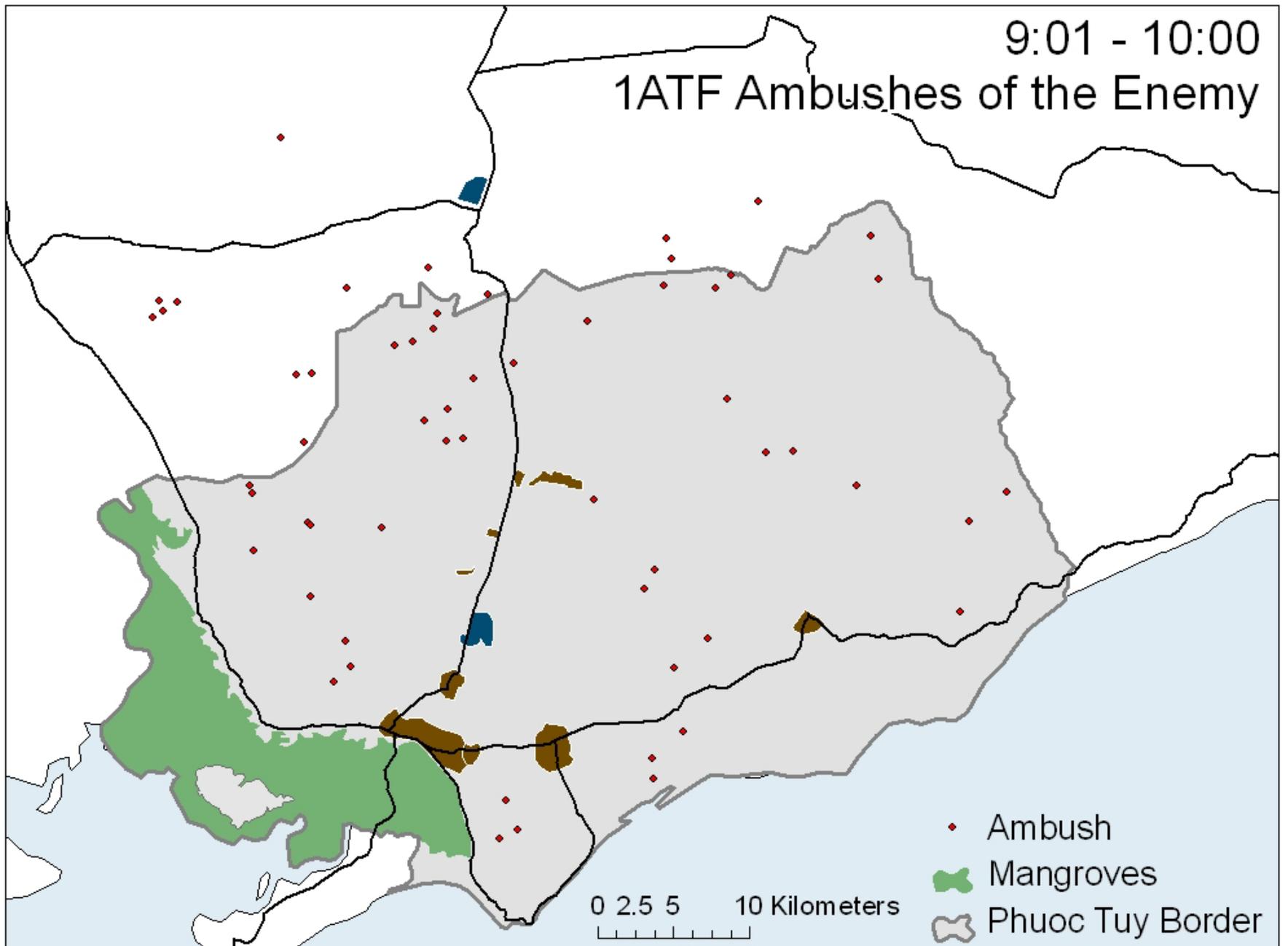
7:01 - 8:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



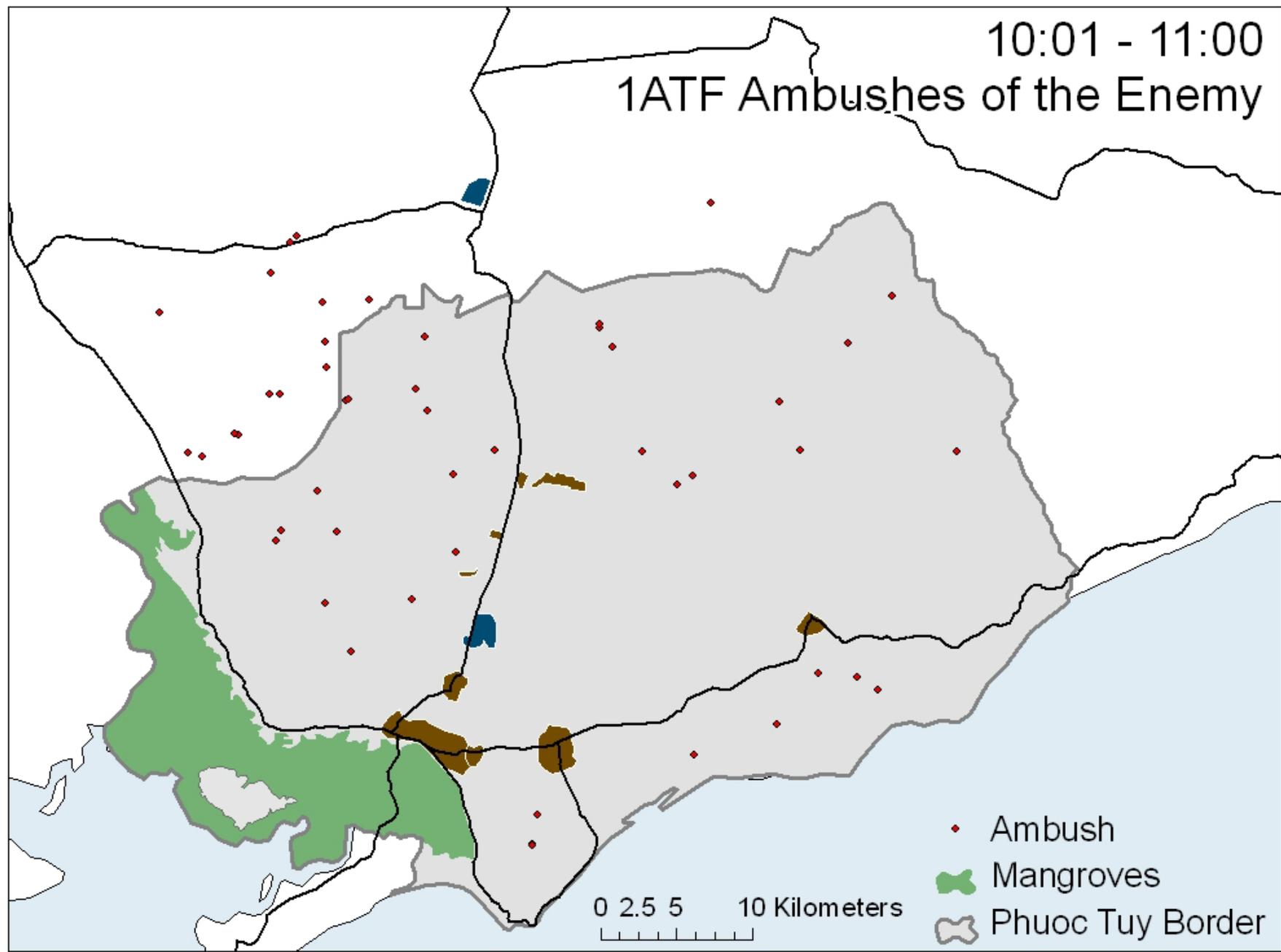
8:01 - 9:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



9:01 - 10:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



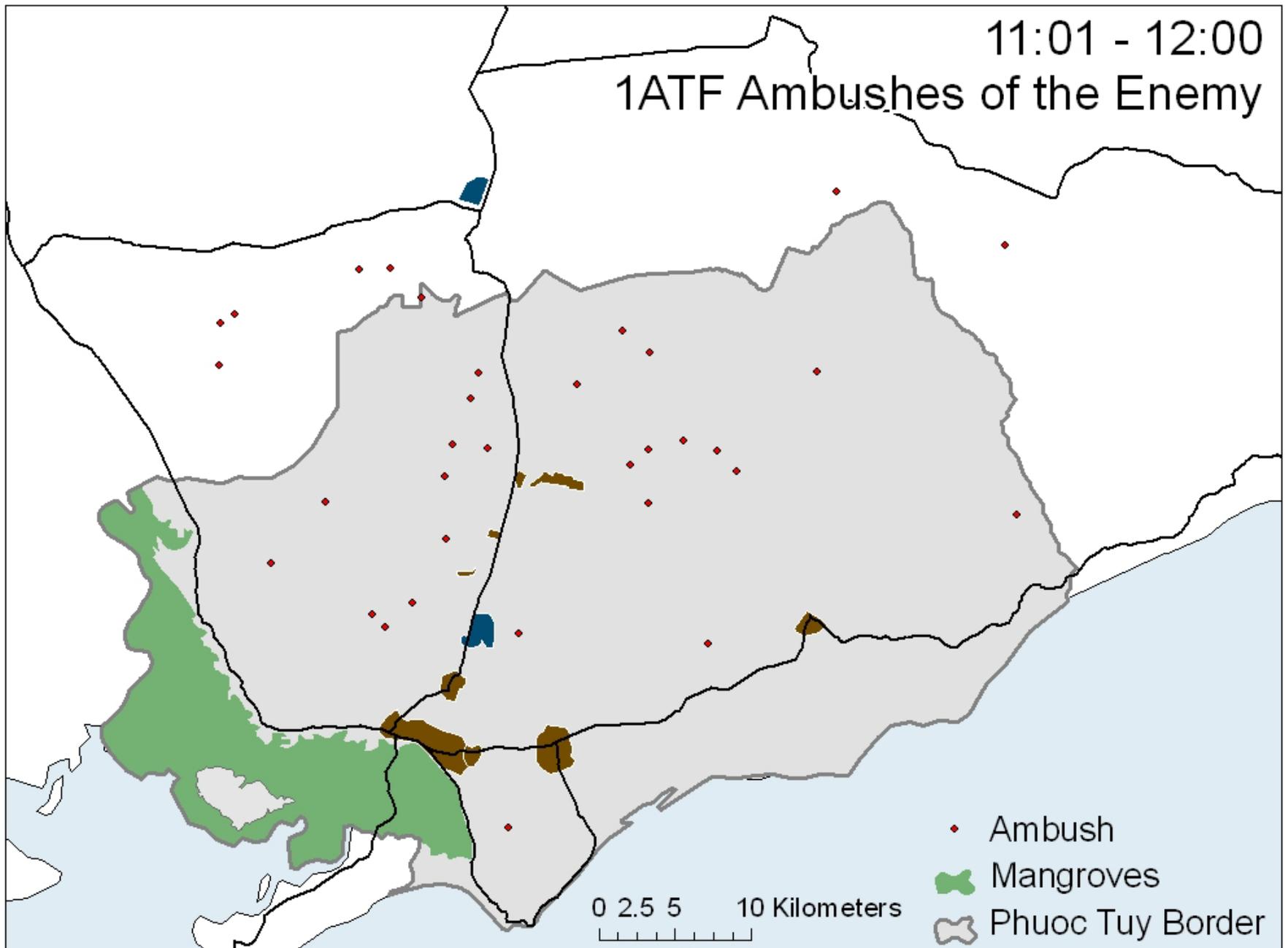
10:01 - 11:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



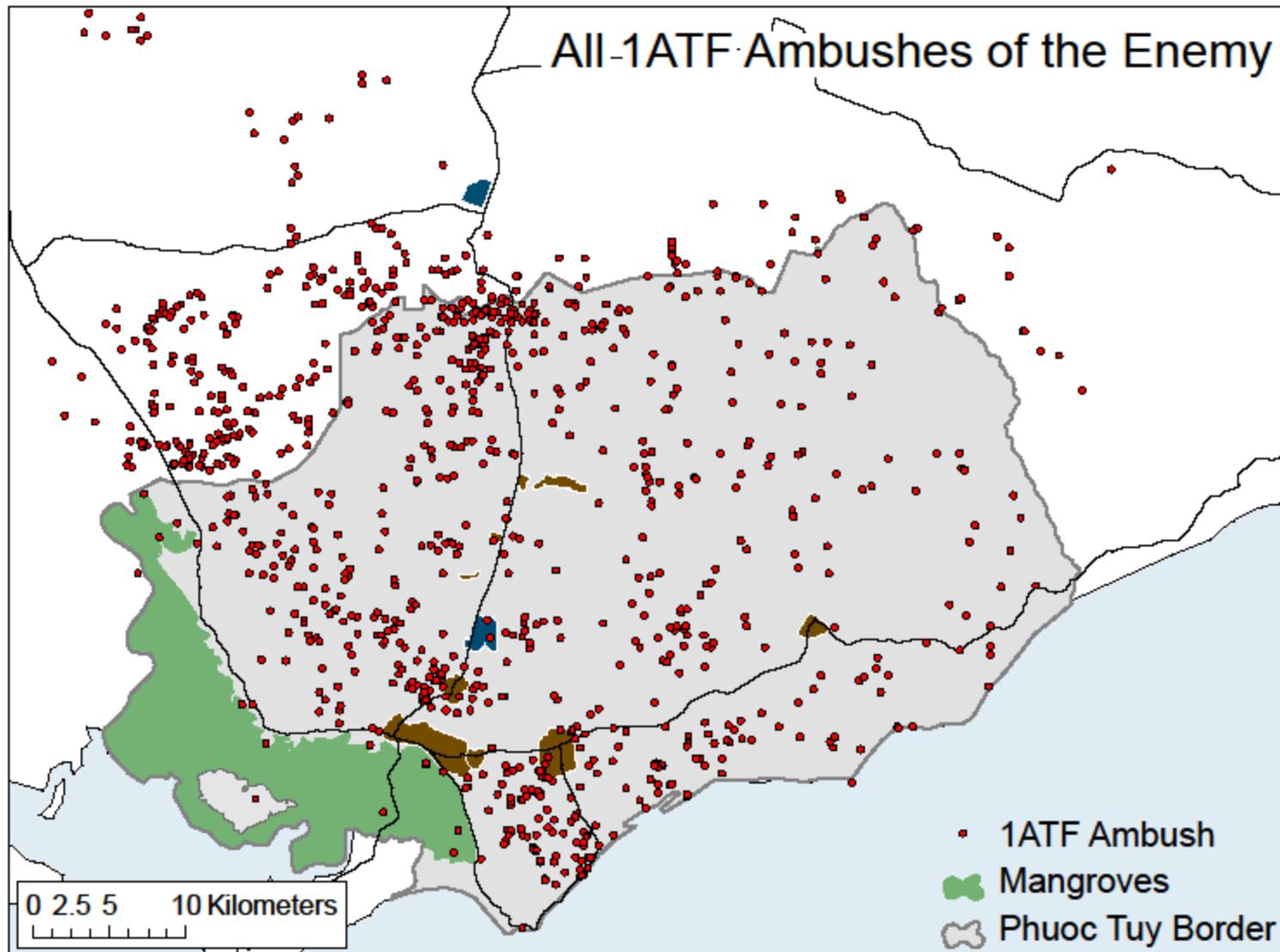
- Ambush
- Mangroves
- Phuoc Tuy Border

0 2.5 5 10 Kilometers

11:01 - 12:00
1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



All-1ATF Ambushes of the Enemy



Results of the ambush battle

- Exploited enemy vulnerabilities –
 - Requirement to resupply from villages
 - Requirement to communicate between base areas
- Reduced ability to resupply and eventually forced large enemy units out of the Province
- Helped to ‘paralyse’ enemy forces and keep them off balance
- This led to reduced ability to interfere with pacification and social, political and economic development in the villages.

Where to from here?

- Add non-combat data to the database
- Add non-1ATF data to the database
- Analyse 1ATF combat and non-combat activity in the context of the whole struggle in Phuoc Tuy Province
- Add a Wiki component
- Put everything on the web

