Enemy positions in Lai Chu, just outside the northwest-walls of the citadel, were pounded continuously by friendly artillery-jet fighters. This area was believed to be the enemy's central and headquarters. Fighting inside the Citadel was very sporadic.

Refugees took advantage of the improved situation and moved from various points toward safer areas, such as Tay Loc, Minh and Mang Ca. These areas became major refugee centers. Administration on both sides of the river of the city was thoroughly disrupted. There were a severe shortage of officials. Many were murdered or abducted, others died accidentally in the fighting, still others simply fled.

On Feb. 13 or the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, the first time in fifteen days, the monsoonal drizzle stopped.

The sky was still lightly clouded but there was some sunlight in the city. Wave after wave of jet bombers flew in and gave air support to the foot soldiers fighting in the Citadel.

Fair weather lasted about three days favoring the air support of the Vietnamese Marine Battle Group A from Phu Bai airfield. From here they moved to the pier on the right bank of the Perfume River, then they used landlift to move over to Bao Vinh quay. Two of the Battle Group's battalions moved safety into the Citadel on Feb. 12.

Battle Group A was commanded by Maj. Hoang Thong, and by Maj. Luong.

The Battle Group's First Battalion, under the command of Phan Van Thang, and Fifth Battalion, under the command of Pham Van Nha, started the Group's Operation Song Than 739/68, which may be worthy of note before initiating their fighting in Hue this battle Group had a major victory in Cai Lay and Go Vap during the enemy's offensive. These districts were some 40 miles south and three north of Saigon, respectively.

The second stage of the operation to liberate the was conducted in six operational areas A, B, C, D, E and F (part of operation, stage II).

Area A was the northeastern corner of the Citadel
SECOND PHASE OF THE LIBERATION OF HUE

Water supply line

- Advance of U. S. Marine Battalion 1/5
- Advance of the Task Force A (Vietnamese Marines)
- Advance of the Third Infantry Regiment

Zone A: 1st Infantry Division Headquarters
Zone B: Occupied by friendly forces
Zone C: TAOR of the 3rd Regiment
Zone D: TAOR of U. S. Marine force
Zone E: Area as occupied by enemy troops
Zone F: RVN Marine TAOR

Including the Speaker, the 11th Tactical Field Hospital and its security forces, the inner garrison of this area, which friendly forces were now in control of, rested along the edge of this U. S. Marine TAOR.

The T-37 and the Third Infantry Division extended the Ta Kien Bridge to the shore of the Perfume River. The Vietnamese Marines were now in charge of this area.

The Ba gate in the center of the city was opened to the Imperial Forces. It was the main entrance to the city. It was surrounded by hundreds of armed forces and hundreds of thousands of people. It was the main entrance to the city.

Controlling the Ba gate was a strategic and tactical battle. The people of the city, with walls and barricades, were fighting for their independence from the enemy. The Imperial Forces were fighting to liberate the city from the enemy.

Operational planning in the liberated sector of Hue was carried out by the Imperial Forces in the major towns and areas.
cluding the Smaller and Greater Mang Ca areas. Here the Command
the 11th Tactical Area and of the First Infantry Division made its headquarters. This area was entirely under government control; its security was handled by the Command's guard garrison. The
gate of this area was the only way to Bao Vinh quay and the route
which friendly supplies and reinforcements were funnelled into
Command headquarters.

Area B covered the eastern side of the Citadel. Just
side of this area the enemy still controlled the Dong Ba market

Area C was the northwestern corner of the Citadel and
the Tay Loc and Tay Linh sections which were being cleared
by the Third Infantry Regiment under the command of Lt. Col. Phan
Po. The West gate of the Citadel in this area was still under
enemy control.

Area D bordered on Mai Thuc Loan street leading to
Ba gate in the north, on Nguyen Thanh street in the east, on the
of the Imperial Palace in the west, and on part of the Ong I
street and the Thuong Tu gate in the south. The sweep of Area
entrusted to the 1/5 US Marine Battalion, which had some
seasoned soldiers equipped with modern weapons ranging up to
and large artillery pieces. This US Marine battalion maneu-
into the Citadel on Feb. 10 and 11. It was deployed on Mai Thuc
Nguyen Thanh and Dinh Bo Linh streets and adjoining areas
to close in on enemy positions in the middle of Area D.

Area E was the Imperial Palace proper, which was
controlled by the enemy. The palace was regarded as the enemy's
critical base. The enemy set up powerful machinegun nests on
walls around the palace in order to hamper the friendly forces'
from all four sided. The Ngo Mon and Phu Van Lau gates of
perial Palace were also in enemy hands. The enemy hung large
these gates.

Area F was the southwestern corner of the Citadel and
the Marine Battle Group A. It included the
sections of Tri Vu and Thuan Cat bordering on Trieu Quang
street in the North, Ton That Thiep street in the West, Le Huan
East and Tran Binh Trong street leading to Bach Ho
the South.
Dai Noi area following the allied counterattack

Ontos tanks with 106mm recoilless rifles were used in the liberation of the former imperial capital.
Gia Long high school where over 20 mass graves were located.
The Areas C, D and F were contested areas at this time. Of these three, Area E or the Imperial Palace was entirely under the control of enemy forces. These forces also controlled vantage points in the southeastern and southern section of the Citadel walls.

The entire Citadel area is about ten square kilometers. The combined Vietnamese-American forces operating in these three contested areas (C, D and F) included seven battalions. The troops stationed in Areas A and B were not included.

Reporter Nguyen Tu, who covered the Marine Battle Group A since the beginning of its Operation Song Than 739/68, gave the following description of its heroic performance during the battle.

"Battle Group A was divided into two columns, the first one being the First Battalion commanded by Maj. Phan Van Thang, and the second being the Fifth Battalion, commanded by Maj. Pham Van Nha. The first objective was the Cao Thang barrack, home of the First ordnance Company which became a frontline base. The barrack, which had been stubbornly defended for fifteen days by some eighty soldiers under the command of Capt. Tran Kim Khue and Lt. Nguyen Van Cap, included a warehouse with a large quantity of ammunition and weapons. Among the weapons were nearly 1,400 up-to-date M16 automatic rifles.

"Lt. Cap said it would be a "great disaster" if the Communists captured the barrack. Both Capt. Khue and Lt. Cap were no longer concerned about the barrack since the stocked ammunition and weapons were dispersed to other places. They were very happy to see the Marines come. They said "we had been entirely isolated from the rest of the rear and cut off from our families for fifteen days".

"After a brief talk with the ordnance officers Maj. Thanh gave the go-ahead for the counter-attack. Maj. Pham Van Nha's Fifth Marine Battalion moved west and down Ton That Thiep street to relieve enemy pressure in the East gate and Sap gate areas. These areas are in the southwestern and southern sections of the Citadel. Maj. Pham Van Thang's First Battalion also moved from the eastern section of Area F toward the southern corner of the Citadel. They moved along Le Huan street. The two units were to meet in the Sap gate area to back up the 1/5 US Battalion which was operating in Area D."
"Newsmen covering the operation of the Vietnamese Marines had to see who would go with the advance reconnaissance company. Maj. Thang jokingly said he did not want to see newsmen dieing his battle. He notified his men over the radio that he was going out "a child" whom someone must meet and escort down the By "child" he meant a good comrade in arms, a friend or war expression. The word did not imply anything derogatory. It's Vietnamese army slang. A Marine took me to the actual battle area minutes later. The area was a maze of torn up trees, broken zigzagging trenches, collapsed houses and the like. The combat Marines were grimly waiting for the assault signals. They were ups from two to half a dozen men.

" The 4th Marine Company, led by Lt. Nguyen Xuan Tong, the advance recon company of the 1st Battalion. The youthful er was poring over a field map. He showed me enemy positions little map. He said one of these positions was in a pagoda and or in a school, roughly 30 and 60 meters from where we were. burst was followed by a big explosion right behind our line, less en meters away. Mud, broken bricks, dust, debris of all sorts, up by the blast, landed right on our heads. Only then did I see that my damn heavy helmet was useful.

" Dusty-faced Lt. Tong shouted at his radio men asking whether they had asked for artillery support. When the answer negative he and his men quickly realized that it was an enemy Over the radio he called for three "crabs" (ARVN slang for "Yes, ready" was the answer from the other end of the line.

" Lt. Tong's 4th company lay low, waiting, firing no until the "crabs" showed up - only three minutes after the call hks moved carefully, firing almost all of their guns, big and It was a deafening sound punctuated by the cracks of collapsing walls. It was hazy and cold since Hue's winter was at its One of Lt. Tong's men, 3rd Lt. Nhut, led a group with armor to take over the pagoda. Automatic weapons fire was heard und the place, moving 30 meters in open terrain under enemy ement like moving 3 kilometers. I moved with the group which ed in a line formation. All of a sudden I was pushed down on bund. I turned aside and saw a Marine soldier lying a few steps grinning and pointing to an enemy gun trained on us. I raised as a thank-you sign.
"I was lying in an open field. I realized I was dangerously exposed to enemy fire. Looking around for a possible shelter, I found to my chagrin only one papaya tree the size of my leg. Better little cover than none. I decided to crawl to the foot of the fragile tree to get concealment from enemy observation rather than murderous enemy AK bullets, which could easily pierce through it. I corrected my helmet, grabbed my damn old still camera and then did the kind of job I had not done for several months - crawling, crawling very slowly. It was pretty good exercise anyway. I managed to reach the papaya tree after all. The firefight continued to rage. No sooner did I take a little rest and a deep sigh of relief than the group leader, Nhu, shouted out an assault order. "Forward, forward..." the shout almost drowned out the scattered gunfire. The group stormed the pagoda. It was empty of enemy but full of broken pieces of religious furniture and, last but not least, empty cartridges.

"The enemy withdrew to a nearby school house and the adjoining abandoned civilian house which stood halfway between the pagoda and the school. I was mopping the sweat and dust from my face when the sound of incoming jet bombers was heard. "Whoosh... and then "boom, boom...". Dust, broken tile, almost everything cemented to the roof of the pagoda rained on our heads and the floor. The bombs scored direct hits on enemy positions between 100 and 150 meters away. Fragments landed near the pagoda where the assault group was waiting for another assault signal. One or two landed right in front of me, well inside the pagoda. Curiously, I touched one black piece of metal. It was as hot as though it just came from a melting pot.

"I sat in a corner of the bullet-scarred pagoda for a few minutes. The lieutenant's radio was in operation again, directing close air support consisting of the bombing and strafing runs by jet fighters. Not one bomb, rocket or round of cannon hit the front position. I overheard a brief radio conversation in which it was reported that another Marine group succeeded in destroying an enemy bunker with some fifteen enemy in it. All were killed. I wanted to be there to take a few shots of the enemy bodies. One Marine told me not to go until the Marines could knock out the enemy position in the house and the school. Furthermore, he said, it was too dangerous for me to get any good snapshots. We were talking to some people in our rank yelled: "Lt Nhu is dashing toward the enemy position. Why? No assault signal yet? ..." Everyone looked at me in a characteristic manner and the Called fire was over the enemy. The enemy was dead. The group leader reported:

"I was sweating profusely. I took my damn old still camera and attached it to the neck of my helmet a long time ago so that both sides of me could take in the action. I did not distinguish between the enemy fire and the fire of our own, bringing in a short and sharp halt. We emptied our ammunition quickly by throwing hand grenades and a few snipers' bullets hit on our gear. The fire was almost completely over and I noticed many rounds did not hit the target. There was a possibility of an enemy ambush from the pagoda itself. Lt Nhu was coming at the end of the line, under cover of a heavy barrage by a couple of squadrons of jet fighters. The fire was dying down and the fire smoke was still visible. I could hear some people yelling: "Lt Nhu is dashing toward the enemy position. Why? No signal yet? ..."
stunned. The soldiers who shouted at him to stop never had a chance to finish their warnings. Nearby halfway between the house and the pagoda, 15 meters away, the lieutenant was cut down by bursts of enemy submachinegun fire. Some soldiers turned their heads away overcome by emotions. Others attempted to dash out to recover his body but none could budge an inch. The bursts of enemy automatic fire were heavy enough to pin them all down. I heard Lt. Tong shout over the radio: "I never told anyone to charge ahead yet. I told everyone to wait until the occupation of the pagoda". Then I heard him report over the radio to his commanding officer about the loss of "a young child" and his men's inability to recover his body as yet. He reported so in an obviously emotional voice.

"From the top of the pagoda's central altar Lord Buddha附件 and quietly witnessed the continuing human tragedy right from the very beginning. The gunfire increased in pace and intensity on both sides. The M.16s of the Marines almost drowned out the blasting enemy AKs. A few Marines, under covering fire, managed to bring the body of Third Lieutenant Nhut back into the pagoda. The evacuation operation lasted fifteen minutes. The lieutenant's body was quickly placed on a waiting stretcher. He was fatally hit in his heart, bullet piercing through the left soft side of his flak jacket. Laid to rest on the stretcher, his head turned a bit on one side, his eyes were tightly closed, his limbs spread wide and loose, his face just looked nothing had happened to him. Somebody had wrapped his body in a poncho. A soldier said Lt Nhut had proven very courageous in several actions. He had led the way in several assaults on enemy positions, namely in the Cai Lay battle shortly before Hue. In Cai Nhut and his fellow soldiers inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy and seized as many as 95 weapons. That was all of the story the dead lieutenant, the soldier could recount. Brief and simple was, the soldier's speech sounded to me much more significant a long eulogy. Emptily and also reverantly I followed the gesture, which was carried out of the pagoda by four soldiers. One of the soldiers was carrying the dead man's M.16 rifle.

"Right on the blood-stained little piece of lawn where he met death someone had left a helmet upside down. I did not know for sure whether it was Lt Nhut's. I guessed it was. It was covered by a piece of old, almost threadbare fabric with some professional drawings and sketches as well as some signatures. I picked it up and saw two lines of handwriting "Live beside you,
"A soldier died. Another soldier stepped forward to take his place. The firefight continued with increasing ferocity, from house to house, from garden to garden, from street to street." 

The Vietnamese and American forces were pledged to annihilate the enemy in the Citadel at all costs. Wave after wave of US Marine jet fighters rained bombs, rockets and cannon fire on enemy positions for two days running. On Feb 14, for the first time in the 16-day-old Hue battle, airstrikes were directed at enemy positions dug into the thick rock and brick walls of the Citadel. The ordnance expended included napalm bombs, three-inch rockets, tear gas bombs and high explosive fragmentary bombs weighing up to 750 pounds.

The enemy continued to hold out from entrenched positions along the great walls encompassing the northeast and southwest sections of the Citadel. Many friendly assault waves were repelled.

The battle for Hue was made even more arduous for the friendly forces by poor weather - low cloud ceilings, nipping cold temperatures, etc. Furthermore the friendly forces were eager to reduce civilian casualties and avoid as much destruction of property as possible. Most of the roads and streets leading to enemy positions were barricaded by him with stolen pieces of furniture, windows, doors etc... The enemy delivered sniper fire against friendly troops from behind these barricades.

Throughout the day of Feb 16 fighting continued in its familiar pace and ferocity inside the Citadel. American artillery fired white phosphorous shells. Crusader jet fighters conducted massive bomb and rocket strikes against enemy positions. Houses, buildings, walls collapsed and burst into flames, lighting part of the ancient capital city that night.

The 1/5 US Marine Battalion pushed back an enemy force to the south in order to trap it within the crossfire of the friendly forces positioned on both sides of the Perfume River. American tanks also maneuvered into the southern end of the Citadel and struck the enemy dug in on the flanks of the Citadel walls.
The main enemy pocket of resistance continued to be one entrenched inside the old Imperial Palace. The enemy used few tanks he had captured at the initial stage of the battle to reinforce his defensive positions around the palace.

Part of the enemy force maneuvered close to the Dong Gia Hoi intersection and positioned mortars to seal off the river supply routes of the friendly forces. This new enemy move forced allied commanders to shell his positions and to temporarily heli- most of the badly needed supplies and equipment. Fires broke out the Dong Ba and Gia Hoi sections with columns of smoke billowing the skies of Hue and visible from miles away.

The Vietnamese Marine Battle Group engaged a fairly enemy force around noon Feb 16 while pressing toward the west end of the Citadel. Thirty one enemy bodies were counted. Six weapons and some explosives were seized. The Marines only suffered light casualties.

The adverse weather conditions on Feb 18 made friendly military operations very difficult by slowing down the advance of friendly troops and hampering the helilift of supplies. One friendly way from Phu Bai came under enemy mortar fire. Though no substantial progress was made during the day between 30 and 35 enemy were killed in scattered engagements. Bad weather, low cloud ceilings (out 150 meters) and poor visibility because of fog, made all air support impossible. Shortly after dark some enemy movements a spotted on the mid river islet. The purpose of the movements unknown.

Around 0430 h. Feb 19, two enemy battalions laun on the first Marine Battalion in the southwestern of the Citadel after softening up the Marine positions with 300 rounds of 82mm mortar and B.40 rockets. Vietnamese the 105mm howitzer positions from the Mang Ca area responded some 2,000 rounds.

Nearly three weeks had passed since the fierce counter- of the friendly forces had begun. The enemy began to give sign of his withdrawal plan. Ranking enemy officers and political anders vanished from the imperial palace area, mostly under cover darkness. It was thought they slipped out through Tran Hung Dao and the Gia Hoi bridge. The enemy's brief maneuver spotted the islet the night before was apparently a diversionary move.
As of Feb 19, the Marines alone accounted for 180 enemy killed and 84 weapons seized while suffering only light casualties.

By Feb 20 only an estimated 350 enemy still held out within the walls of the Citadel.

Before the attack on the remnants of the enemy in the Citadel our psywar teams called on them to surrender over their high powered loudspeakers. Even fiercer fire from enemy positions responded to the message. The Marines conducted their final attack in the northwest-southwest direction. The enemy was solidly entrenched in foxholes, trenches and bunkers which were dug into the thick walls of the Citadel.

Three battalions of the 1st US Aircav Division mounted an assault on a village five kilometers northwest of Hue city on the morning of Feb 21. The village was believed to be employed by the enemy as a staging and supply base for his forces operating in Hue. The enemy was firmly entrenched and held out ferociously. The cost the enemy 163 killed, four suspects captured for interrogation and 31 weapons seized. American troops lost 12 killed and 137 wounded in the action.

On the morning of Feb 22, in order to end the devastating Hue battle as soon as possible, the 1st ARVN Infantry Division sent two Ranger battalions to reinforce the Marines and Infantry units in the city. These were the 39th and 21st Ranger Battalions. The 21st had just arrived from pre-Tet operation in the Khe Sanh valley. These two battalions were assigned to recapture the Gia Hoi section.

On the morning of Feb 22 loudspeakers were once more to call on enemy remnants to surrender and to require that they save the lives of the civilians trapped in the fighting allowing them to get out of the fighting zone. The enemy came out in small groups each bearing one or several white flags. They were taken across the Huong River aboard junks, sampans, anything that could float and toward refugee centers on the southern bank of the river.

Around noon on Feb 23 two Vietnamese Marine companies recaptured the Right gate of the Citadel after wiping out an enemy force of 31 men with one BAR and nine individual weapons. The Marines had only one man wounded.
Another Marine unit engaged an unknown-sized enemy force in the southwestern section of the Citadel and killed ten of the enemy. The Marines suffered no casualties. American Marines captured a single storied structure in the southeastern section. From this structure they controlled the city's main bridge, called Trang or Nguyen Hoang bridge.

Additional US Marine reinforcements were helilifted into the walled imperial city on the same day amidst heavy enemy fire.

On the morning of Feb 24 the Marine Battle Group A attacked from the West gate area toward three objectives. The objectives were Nam Dai, Nha Do gate and the Ton That Thiep Street area.

The 4th Marine Battalion was assigned to storm the Dai positions from which the solidly entrenched Communist and Vietcong had been holding out for 12 days. The Marines did not over­take these enemy positions until 2100h. They killed 85 enemy and captured 30 assorted weapons.

The 1st Marine Battalion had to employ tear gas to drive the enemy from his bunkers, foxholes and trenches. The Marines also had to engaged the enemy in a fierce hand-to-hand fight. This fight caused the outnumbered, exhausted enemy to lose 72 killed, 3 wounded enemy positions until 2100h. They killed 85 enemy and captured 30 assorted weapons.

The 5th Marines wiped out the enemy positions in the Thiep area much sooner than the other two battalions seize objectives. They accounted for 26 enemy killed and five weapons including two anti-aircraft machineguns.

At the same time the Marine Battle Group A gave support to a friendly unit in the recapture of the Phu Van Lau area. That day, and for the first time in the 25-day-old Hue battle, the Vietnamese flag was flown again atop the giant, stately flagpole. The enemy flag was pulled down around 0400 h. on Feb. 24.

On the same memorable day the Vietnamese Marines moved into the Imperial Palace proper which the demoralized enemy had abandoned and from which they had fled to the southern wall of the complex.

On Feb 25 the Rangers also regained complete control of the Da Hoi area. The enemy had abandoned this area after he had
The Vietnamese national flag about to be hoisted at the flagpole amid still heavy fighting.

RVN troops assaulting remaining Viet Cong entrenched in the Imperial Palace.
ost the Imperial Palace. Property destruction was comparatively small in the area but civilian casualties were considered high. Most of the casualties were caused by the enemy through massacres, murders etc. Scores of civilians had been murdered in cold blood. They had been simultaneously murdered by bursts of submachinegun fire or simply buried alive in mass graves.

The battle for Hue was considered over on the 26th day. The friendly forces, Vietnamese and American, started a series of outwards sweep operations from their recaptured positions in town. The city was practically calm although gunfire was still heard almost continuously. Friendly artillery units fired all day and night. The average local citizen thought that although the city itself had been secured by friendly troops the war was far from finished. The city was still vulnerable to enemy attack. An estimated five enemy divisions still fowed to withdraw from the area. According to American military forces some 2,500 enemy were killed. The Communists, however, admitted to only 1,042 killed and failed to disclose the total of their wounded. On the allied side 213 Vietnamese troops were killed and 9 wounded. The American forces suffered 53 killed and 380 wounded.

B. - THE ANCIENT CAPITAL IN DISTRESS

From the second through the fourth day of Tet (Jan 31 through Feb 2) the Viet Cong moved freely in the streets of Hue. There were no reactions from friendly forces at this time.

During this period the enemy had a field day making political propaganda for what he called the People's Alliance for Democracy and Freedom. On the Quang Tri - Thua Thien front this organization was led by the former Hue University teacher Le Van. A number of college students and civilians, who had participated in abortive Buddhist-led anti-government campaigns in previous years, supported the Alliance and played a fairly active part in its chapter. Leading student members of the Alliance included Phu Ngoc Tuong and Hoang Phu Ngoc Anh. There had been rumors that Professor Hao had sneaked out of town three days before Day, or Jan 27, to join the Viet Cong.

People blamed the high rate of civilian murders on militant informers acting in response to personal feuds over political matters in preceding years. A number of civilian agencies held out
President Nguyen Van Thieu immediately visited the population of Hue after the liberation of the city (2 February 1968).

LTG Hoang Xuan Lam, I Corps Commander.

Mrs. Nguyen Van Thieu talking to an old Hue resident.

Valiantly against the North Vietnamese platoons that surrounded our school until the end.

One hundred civilians had to get together and help each others. Had they been able to, they would have let the North Vietnamese nationals, living for two days from river to another. They regained the city of Hue. Another ritual for the resistance. Three hours before Tet.

The evening of Tet was a day for all the soldiers, policemen, and all the people supporting the Delegate's office. They were allowed to gather.

People were allowed to stage mass arrests. There was a lighter one and a heavier one. Each person was detained in the Giang, the government control. In this article, I will describe the three stages of history.

First, people were allowed together and a citizen category was set. The object of the organization was to help keep the public order and to keep public safety. Each house confiscated...
against heavy odds. A poorly equipped Viet Nam Quoc Dan platoon, among other groups stood its grounds at the Thanh Nhon pool until this part of the city was recaptured by friendly forces. A hundred Phu Cam Roman Catholic youths fought for four days on until they ran out of ammunition and had to withdraw to Phu Bai. If they been given sufficient ammunition they would certainly not let the Phu Cam area fall into enemy hands. Some American civilians, living in a house near the Nam Giao bridge, held out valiantly two days and refused to surrender. They were all killed, one after another. Their bravery won them the great admiration of the people. Another group of American civilians, employees of the Industrial Relations Department, living at No 7 Ly Thuong Kiet, inflicted sizable enemy casualties that the enemy had to use B.40 rockets to destroy the house. Two of the seven died in the early stages of the battle. The remaining five, including two women, held out for 24 days before they surrendered.

The enemy virtually controlled the entire city on the morning of Tet Day or January 30. During the next two days enemy men and agents moved about in the city freely. They were controlled people as if they were operating in VC territory.

The VC called people out of their homes to "political meetings", classified them into categories - civil servants, police and just plain citizens. Except for the last category people summoned were detained overnight at the Government's office building on the right bank of the Perfume River. They were allowed to go home the next morning.

People speculated that the enemy was starting a three-class arrest and murder scheme. The case mentioned above was just one while the serious case involved those civilians in the Gia Hoi area which was under even firmer enemy control. In this area the enemy succeeded in carrying out all of the stages of his sinister scheme.

First he sealed off the occupied area, herding the people together and classifying them into categories. The just plain category was told to form civic organizations. This process was designed to help the enemy have tight control on the populace. The organizations had a representative to take orders from the enemy. These plain citizens were told to continue to work normal hours and keep public order. Then enemy troops and agents came to confiscating all private radio in an apparent effort to cut
US Marines trying to put an end to VC resistance at the Orphanage of Lam Ty Hi.

The An Cuu Market following a bombing raid
The temporary tomb of Mr. Tran Dinh Phuong, former Deputy Province Chief for Administration Affair in Thua Thien.

The surgery and private home of Lt. Doctor Nguyen Xuan Lang, who could have lived had he not tried to take refuge elsewhere.
the people off from the outside world. At the same time they spread the rumor that the entire Thua Thien province and the whole country had come under their control.

In the next step they called on all national government employees, such as public servants, soldiers and police, to surrender their individual weapons and to report to their military place of duty in order to benefit from clemency measures. Failing to comply they would have to face severe punishment. Large numbers of such people turned themselves in to the Communists and were allowed to freely return and stay home for two days. None were forced to do anything for the enemy. The move was apparently designed to deceive the public.

The third stage was the actual mass arrest and terror drive against these former employees of the local government.

After these two days of having been freed people were asked to attend "political meetings" by the enemy cadremen who went to each of their homes. A number of people never came back or were never heard of again. The number of "missing" increased with each passing day. These people had been murdered somewhere in the area after reporting to the "political meetings". They had never suspected they would meet tragic death; nor had they been aware of the time they were to die. Survivors and enemy agents, captured in the later stages of the Hue battle, recounted that the victims had been told to dig air raid trenches during the daytime. Then they were actually taken to these so-called trenches in the night to be massacred by submachine gun fire or simply buried alive. Apparently the victims had never suspected they were digging their own mass graves. In many cases, victims were murdered and shoved into the graves soon after they finished digging.

An estimated 1,000 people were murdered and murdered in this way by the Viet Cong in the suburbs of Hue. They had been public servants, soldiers and those who had experienced feuds with pro-Communist elements during the political disturbances in preceding years. Major mass graves were later found at the Hoi high school, the Tang Quang Tu pagoda, the Bai Dau area (30 mass graves here alone) and Emperor Tu Duc's tomb (another mass graves here). The bodies recovered from these and other graves showed evidence of atrocious, painful deaths. A number of bodies were headless or limbless - or both. Others had the
The French people took to the streets more than once to denounce the Viet Cong for the many Communist crimes in Hue.
tied behind their backs. Still others were tied together in groups of tens or fifteens, indicating that the victims had been shoved into the mass graves and buried alive.

Among the known massacres in which the victims were buried alive or died similarly painful deaths, was the case involving three West German teachers of the Hue Medical School and the wife of one of them. The victims were Dr and Mrs Hort Gunther Krain, Dr Alois Alterkoster and Dr Raimund Discher. They had come to Vietnam to teach at the Hue University under a West German technical aid program. They were abducted on Jan 31 or on Tet Day during the first hours of the enemy offensive on the city.

When they stormed the Hue University compound enemy troops and agents did not arrest the Vietnamese teachers apparently because one of their top leaders, Prof. Le Van Hao, had been one of their colleagues only a few days earlier. The graves of the West German professors were not found until April. These cold-blooded murders aroused the conscience and indignation of the entire civilized world. Hardly anyone had ever believed that the Viet Cong were barbarous enough to murder servants of charity and welfare.

These fanatical massacres of defenseless people were bitterly condemned by public opinion and the press around the world. The London Times ran a banner headline protesting these mass executions. During the course of one of these execution reporter Steven Harris met tragic death. In the French newspaper Minute, reporter Yves Gautron wrote that no one could tolerate these savage acts of Communist terrorism against the innocent people in Hue. In France students held a mass protest rally at the Ternes Square to condemn these atrocities.

Vietnamese officials killed during the Hue tragedy included the late Hue Deputy Mayor Tran Dinh Phuong, the late Prosecutor of the Thua Thien field court Maj Buu Thanh, the late Justice of the Hue Court of Appeals Nguyen Khoa Hoang and his lawyer son. Deputy Mayor Phuong was murdered right in front of his home. He was temporarily buried eight days later at the same place where he was shot. Maj Thanh was abducted and never heard of again. Justice Hoang was abducted from his home and his son was also taken away while pleading for the release of his father.

Maj Tran Huu Bao, deputy province chief of Thua Thien was wounded leading a defensive action against an enemy assault.
Witnesses in Hue recounted that at the early stages of enemy occupation enemy troops were forbidden to violate people's property. Some of them even provided food to the people. Purportedly they even used captured Vietnamese military trucks to carry rice from government warehouses to each home on the third day of Tet as a "Tet gift" from the so-called people's liberation army. Only a few people really received this kind of gift. This symbolical gesture on the part of the enemy was aimed at winning the friendship of the local people. Apparently it achieved its objectives with some naive people.

The behavior and policies of the enemy in the latter days of occupation, resulting in the losses of innumerable civilian lives and great amounts of private property served as a blunt warning of communist savagery to the people of Hue. A lesson, a really bitter one, was taught them: Under no circumstances can a free people cooperate with Communism.

What was left in the path of war were scenes of sickening, almost irreparable destruction. The city was virtually reduced to rubble. Emaciated, haggard people wandered around, aimless, and bewildered. The evidence of the huge loss of human life was seen on the heads of housewives and children in the form of their mourning turbans as they were roaming about the streets shopping for meager, cheap food. They were also looking for whatever might be left usable among the rubble or they were just begging.

It was feared that the people of Hue might starve since surface supply routes were still unsafe and airlifts were difficult, sometimes impossible, due to adverse weather conditions.

Actually the people generally still had some food of their own. Their houses were destroyed or damaged by the fighting but their rice and other foodstuffs were saved.

In early March 1968 there were rumors that the local government headed by the Mayor had made a suspected deed concerning the distribution of rice from two governmental warehouse and the private Vien De company's warehouse. During this distribution of rice people were allowed to come and get as much as they could physically carry. It was said that the uncontrolled distribution of rice was an opportunity for the local government to clarify the Mayor's suspected action.
With no more market, people gather in the open to exchange goods.

The Dong Ba Market after occupation of Hue.

The Nguyen Thanh area

The Thuong Tu bridge

The rumors of the locals, rumors centered on a later date.

also scarce. The kids' stock waves were denied, which survived raised prices. The unfortunate owners of the local people, physician, Ton Nu An, kept receiving water and their house. The very few survivors couple and stayed in town.

stole from almost every valuables.éstated scrap designed to

were destroyed.

extensive damage of mortar torn.

other pieces of vases, which to pieces by 2-1/2 kilometers. Thanh street.
The rumors apparently originated from the excessively bitter feelings the local people about the war and its deplorable aftermath. The rumors certainly would be more fully clarified by the government at a later date.

Some other foodstuffs and essentials besides rice were scarce. Only surplus canned food and C-rations from allied stocks were seen on sale on the sidewalks of Hue. The few drug stores which survived the 26-day battle did a brisk business. Most of them raised prices deliberately, ignoring the sufferings of the impoverished fortunate masses. People of the Hue were surprised to learn that managers of these stores prized money above humanity and acted against the conscience of civilized, well educated men. On the other hand many local people regretted the death of the entire family of a military physician, Lt Nguyen Xuan Lang. Dr Lang and his pharmacist wife Nu Ai Quy and the couple's two children died of bullet wounds received while attempting to flee from their home on Phan Boi Chau street, which was also Mrs Ai Quy's drug store. Surprisingly enough, their house remained untouched by the war to become one of the city's very few such fortunate structures. People said that the youthful couple and their children would not have met tragic death, if they had stayed in their house throughout the battle. But who knows?

Thievery and looting were widespread. War victims stole from their fellow sufferers. All deserted houses were emptied of most everything usable from kitchen utensils to furniture and valuables. Robbed victims sought to steal from others. Many houses sported scribbled signs saying "Occupied houses", the signs being signed to discourage prospective thieves.

Some eighty per cent of the city's houses and buildings were destroyed or damaged by the battle.

The quarter-square-mile Imperial Palace suffered extensive damage. The stately Ngo Mon gate, which took several rounds of mortar and cannon fire threatened to collapse. Its roof was badly damaged.

The gold plate throne in the Palace was intact but the other pieces of furniture in the Imperial Hall were broken or knocked among the debris on the floor. Most of the precious giant chinas, which were several centuries old, were broken or reduced pieces by the blast waves of artillery and shellings. The Citadel 1/2 kilometer square, was practically left a shambles. The Nguyen Van street and adjoining areas were only an indiscriminate mass
The Dong Ba Gate

The Ben Ngu Bridge was only slightly damaged.
The Phu Cam bridge. It was to be rebuilt.
of rubble. The tall walls of the Citadel were torn at several places. The civilian battle casualties, excluding those civilians murdered or buried alive in mass graves by the enemy, were the highest in the city's history. Property destruction was the greatest since the birth of the city. Some 944 civilians were known killed and 784 wounded. The killed included 378 who died in the First Precinct or inside the walled Citadel, 400 in the city's Second Precinct on the left bank of the Perfume River, and 166 in the Third Precinct on the right bank of the river. Some 4,456 civilian houses were totally destroyed, 3,360 damaged by more than 50% and 2,757 damaged by less than 50%. Hardest hit and entirely destroyed were 2,815 structures in the Citadel, 895 on the left bank and 746 on the right bank. More than 50% damage were 1,382 houses in the Citadel, 1,525 on the left bank and 453 on the right bank. Damaged less than 50% were 1,046 structures in the Citadel, 1,036 on the left bank and 673 on the right bank. On the average the bridges inside the city were damaged by 60%. The An Cuu bridge, blown by the enemy, required reconstruction. The Kho Ren, Phu Cam and Nam Gai bridges collapsed almost entirely. The Bach Ho railroad bridge lost one span. The Gia Hoi bridge received some mortar holes and was already repaired. The Kim Long bridge collapsed entirely and was rebuilt. The city's key steel and concrete Trang Tien bridge lost its two middle spans. This bridge became re-useable for pedestrians when a pontoon was used to link the other spans together.

C. - THE ENEMY'S SCHEME FOR THE HUE OFFENSIVE

In carrying out his schemed attack on Hue the enemy had at his disposal an operational staff, two assault infantry regiments which were supported by the city-based secret agents and two additional infantry regiments. The latter served both as backup and replacement units.

The main force elements were the 5th Regiment and fifth column namely the 5th Command of Hue headed by Nguyen Van Huy, the 6th Regiment commanded by VC Lt. Col. Nguyen Trong Dan.

The reinforcing regiments were the 9th Regiment commanded by VC Lt. Col. Di, and an element of the 8th Regiment. The 8th Regiment was an offspring of the Song Lo Regiment and was not brought into action until the later stages of the offensive. The Regiment was also previously known as the Cu Chinh Lan Regiment, which had been named after its late commander Cu Chinh Lan who died in the 1951 Operation Hoa Binh. Slogans praising the spirit of

- 284 -
were scribbled on the wall of the Imperial City's Ngo Mon gate and could be seen in the wake of the Hue battle. This proved that several elements of the Lan regiment had participated in the Citadel battle under the banner of the 9th Regiment.

Twenty days before the actual offensive the enemy made preparation for the Hue offensive. The plan of his offensive was as follows:

The 5th Regiment, which included Battalions K4A and K4B, and the 21st sapper Battalion supported by the city-based agents, attacked the city from the south. The sappers infiltrated the city on the night of Jan 28 two days before Tet.

The 6th Regiment included Battalions K1, K2 and K6, the 4th sapper Battalion and four support companies. The four support companies were C15, C16, C17, and C18, reinforced by the guerrilla company DKB plus local guerrilla elements from Huong Tra and Hong Dien districts and two sapper groups consisting of 40 men. This reinforced 6th Regiment had the mission to mount the offensive from the north. Its objectives were the 1st ARVN Infantry Division Command headquarters in the Greater Mang Ca area, the Tay Loc airfield and the Imperial Palace.

The offensive plan of this Regiment had been outlined as follows:

General objective: the Citadel as a whole.
Key targets and firing priority: the Mang Ca area and the airfield.
The storming points: the Chanh Tay gate, the An Hoa gate, the northern section of the Citadel and the Mang Ca area.
Next target: Huong Tra district town.
Artillery targets: The ARVN artillery and armor positions in Ha.
Tactics: advance as close to the Citadel as possible; in case of assault using all available fire power.
Infiltration methods: cross the river to join at Cay Da Tru (or banyan), use the banyan's pendant roots to climb up the Citadel and enter the Citadel; simultaneously use the underground ducts to enter the Citadel disregard the fighting outside.

The enemy's advance scheme was carried out as follows:

The 5th Regiment crossed the river at the two ferry
The Trang Tien bridge had one of its spans destroyed forcing the population to use sampans to cross the River of Perfume.

After the arrival of engineer troops, two narrow lanes were immediately launched for the people's use.
The treasury after the fighting

Post Office
points Khe Moc Nang and Dinh Mon on the night of Jan 30. It did not reach the city proper until 0700h because one of its elements was ambushed by friendly troops at the Liem bridge intersection.

The 5th Regiment started out from the Nui Gio (Windy Mount) area about 12 kms west of Hue, moved northeastward through the Soc Chang Brook, assembled near the Truong Son outpost and crossed several ricefields to regroup at Coi Ke. Another enemy battalion joined the 5th Regiment to cross the Thong Cung Mountain. The regrouped at Thanh Khe hamlet, crossed Highway No 1 and were joined by two DKZ-75 companies. They split into columns, one positioning at La Chu and the other at Duc Buu - Ngo Tuong, just north of the Mang Ca camp.

The 9th Regiment, which was a support and replacement unit, included the 416th and 418th Battalions moving from the Don Mountain area, 20 kms west of Hue. It crossed the Bo River to the Thong Cung Mountain where it was reinforced by Battalion K6, 6th Regiment, and moved northeastward along the Van Trung Xa and Coc Phuong roads then through La Chu, Trieu Son Tay and Coi Ke successively to a staging area just northwest of the city.

In addition, the enemy set up a supply route, Route 12, leading to the north of the city to bring supplies in and wounded out of the city.

Finally the 8th Regiment sent one of its major elements into the city from the northern side. The enemy's offensive plan had been plotted carefully.

According to enemy documents seized from the 6th Regiment by attacking the northern side of the Citadel they would attack the headquarters of the 1st ARVN Infantry Division Command and the An Hoa gate.

The enemy divided a sapper company of his into four groups of ten men each. Each group was equipped with two B40 and one B41 rocket launchers, AK and CKZ rifles. Each of the rifles had 200 rounds of ammo and each of the sappers was given 20 explosives and a quantity of dog poison. The commanding officer of the 12th battalion personally supervised these four groups. The sapper company commander led the advance party. Battalion K1 detailed one of its platoons to join the assault and the platoon was led by the battalion commander. At H-hour, these groups quietly crossed the river from Hue into the city.
Hue residents can be seen mourning the fallen following the month-long fighting in Hue.

View of Boulevard Tran Hung Dao following the bitter fighting in Hue.

A few Hue residents can be seen mourning their beloved ones following the month-long fight in Hue.
the Trieu Son Tay hamlet on makeshift nylon rafts consisting of a 1 meter square of plastic. Each group had two or three larger nylon rafts to carry its weapons across the river.

After crossing the river three of these groups sneaked along the Citadel wall to attack the First Infantry Division headquarters in the Mang Ca area while the fourth attacked the An Hoa gate watchtower. The latter group succeeded in blasting the watchtower by the nearby bunker on top of the Citadel, and stormed the gate. The other groups immediately followed the fourth group and consolidated for the attack on the 1st Infantry Division Command compound in Mang Ca, but were pinned down there by the compound defenders. The following morning when friendly APC-backed relief forces came, the enemy withdrew into adjoining houses and divided themselves into two wings - one fighting the relief force and the other defending the retreat route through the west gate.

From the west side of the Citadel they launched an assault on the Tay Loc airfield, the Imperial Palace and the Citadel itself, with three battalions, including a sapper battalion (minus company) and two infantry battalions (short one company). They conducted the assault from many directions with company sized or larger units which:
- Attacked the An Hoa bridge and the Chanh Tay gate.
- Infiltrated the Citadel through the drainage duct system.
- Attacked the Tay Loc airfield from the west side of the church.
- Reached Cuong De Street through drainage ducts.
- Occupied the western wall of the Citadel.
- Moved on the Imperial Palace.
- Attacked up Yet Kieu Street to seize the tall flagpole.
- Occupied the southwestern area of the Citadel and the Dong Ba place (this group detailed one platoon to seize the Chieu Hoi building, the Court of Appeals building and the Information service building).
- Attacked the Regional Force company guarding the Bach Ho bridge.
- Seized civilian sampans and junks to move to the Bai Dau area to government relief forces.
- Attacked with a battalion sized force to seize An Hoa village.

The regimental commander of the 6th enemy Regiment led the main effort himself. As stated previously, all the above mentioned objectives, except for the Tay Loc airfield and the ordnance area, easily fell into enemy hands. The enemy relied on the strength of their artillery fire and heavy artiller
of a 1.1 kilometer nylon snare. The enemy fought friendly counterattack forces mainly by fighting as close to them as possible in order to avoid or discourage friendly artillery and air support. On the first day he fought fiercely and almost continuously; that night he harassed friendly forces and never let them rest. Next day, he again fought fiercely and continuously. His tactics consisted of fighting in skirmish formations, by concentrating his groups for attacks, by coordinating ground assaults with artillery, by sniper fire, by small-group delaying actions against friendly advancing troops, by attacking the rear or the flanks of friendly formations. At night he sent out small groups to conduct harassing attacks with B40 and B41 RPG fire on our positions.

The enemy took extensive casualties from friendly heavy artillery and air support.

An estimated 7,500 enemy troops participated directly in the battle. They consisted of at least three regiments of 2,000 men each plus the sappers based in and around the city.

According to Viet Cong documents the Viet Cong suffered 1,042 killed and a larger number of wounded. Those killed included a regimental commander, eight battalion commanders, 24 company command and 72 platoon leaders. The enemy attack consisted of two phases: the offensive phase from Jan 30 through Feb 6 and the defensive phase from Feb 7 through 25.

While occupying the city the enemy claimed to have persuaded some 600 young people to join his ranks. He seized a Treasury safe with four million piastres and liberated 1,800 prisoners from the city jail. He also claimed that he succeeded in forming the People's Alliance for Democracy and Peace with Professor Le Van Tao as chairman, Mrs Tuan Chi, Venerable Thich Don Hau and two unidentified Communists as alliance members.

The enemy forces received orders to withdraw from Hue on Feb 23 but we did not regain control of the entire city until the end of the following day.

D. LESSONS LEARNED

Enemy documents revealed some of the following shortcomings committed by his units:
The local police station following an intense attack by B.40 and 57mm recoilless rifles.

The Fanxico Church.

The support of the National Front for Democracy and these organizations, in the city's population, demoralized the destruction of the feuds, the masses.

The 3rd Company one trooper stated:

- His use of the
- The protection to launch attacks
- The support of these organizations, in the city's population, demoralized the destruction of the feuds, the masses.

The rainy weather and ceiling was only

The invalid assault on Hue.
intelligence concerning the situation in An Hoa village, where battalion was unnecessarily committed to assaulting a friendly borne battalion which had moved out previously.

Lack of effective coordination during the Mang Ca assault, several elements got lost and failed to reach the assigned objectives. caused the assaults to be uncoordinated (The Tay Loc airfield, should have been attacked before the logistics area was not ked until later).

by makeshift defensive tactics were used rather than offensive as; of the recorded 416 actions, 254 were defensive in nature.

disciplined but later got out of line, pilfering and looting people's ty. For example Thanh, a guerrilla, looted a trunk filled with nd watches. Luy robbed two umbrellas in the name of liberation.

3rd Company without authorization stole and butchered a pig and hooper stole 20 sheaves of wool yarn as a gift to some women.

The following factors worked in the enemies favor:

use of the people as a shield.

protection of the Citadel walls for his defense and from which attacks.

support of a number of city people to form the People's Alliance mocracy and Peace and other subsidiary organizations. Though organizations brought together only a small fraction of the population, their conception and subsequent activities greatly ized the people. They were a contributing factor in the vast tion of the city and because of previous political and personal the massacre of thousands of people.

The enemy held the Citadel for 26 days due to the cold, rather and the poor visibility over the city (at times the cloud was only 150 meters).

The following major shortcomings and mistakes were ed by the friendly side:

valid assessment of the enemy capability to conduct a ground on Hue. Consequently the US 1st Aircav Division, which had
The Ngo Mon Gate following the fighting in Hue

The Ngo Mon Gate viewed from the Thai Hoa Palace
The inner court of the Imperial Palace following the fighting. Of the two litchi trees brought here from China, only one was left standing.
been stationed west of the city, was not notified of the danger of an enemy offensive and was not ordered to make a swift interdiction of intervention.

- When the attack started, friendly troops were not ready for swift action.
- The Hue radio station did not keep the people of Hue properly informed of the true situation. Consequently the enemy had a free hand to make propaganda all day and night during the early stages of the battle through the use of loudspeakers.

Therefore, we can see that the Hue offensive was the most spectacular enemy action in the war. Its happening defied the imagination of many people.

Local officials, when they heard the enemy-spread rumors about government leaders having been killed, became confused and could not act.
The Communists' surprise assault on Quang Tri city early April 1967 served to heighten the Quang Tri city people's vigilance toward further enemy shelling or ground assaults. It encouraged them to contribute positively to the defense of the city. The enemy military pressures on the town lasted from then till the end of 1967. A frequent reminder of enemy pressures was served by the big battles in the Khe Sanh area and the almost nightly B52 strikes, which shook this embattled town. Each and every family in the town had a bunker of its own as each and everyone anticipated yet another enemy assault on the town might happen anytime. Tension was omnipresent throughout the town. Reports of daily enemy minings and ambushes on the highways to Dong Ha in the north and to Hue in the south brought the widening specter of another enemy ground offensive on the town even closer in everyone's anticipation.

By personal experience rather than by educated reasoning, the entire town people resented Communism. They simply evacuated any place which Communist troops occupied. This popular contempt accounted handsomely for many major victories scored by 1st Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, which had been bearing the brunt of the Quang Tri war for nearly a decade. Headquartered at A Vang, the regiment was remembered for having inflicted on the enemy the most serious casualties for a single battle in the war a few hours after the 1967 Christmas truce - 221 enemy killed were the My Thuy beach in Hai Lang district on December 29, 1967.

This is how the Quang Tri offensive developed:

On the 29th day of the 12th lunar month (Jan 28, 1968) the Quang Tri province chief, Lt Col Nguyen Am, a one-time Commander of the First Infantry Regiment, reported increasingly heavy pressure from the enemy in the Khe Sanh valley area. This resulted from the infiltration of 325th NVA Division from the North. The enemy was engaged and fighting raged throughout the day. The Vietnamese infantrymen, though given artillery and air support, had to fall back to Xom Cham, some two miles away, and to combine their operation with US Marine units stationed in the area. The pullout allowed the mass exodus of some 1,500 civilians, who were later transferred to Quang Tri city.
By increasing their pressures on Khe Sanh valley, the enemy troops were apparently trying to divert part of the friendly forces from Quang Tri city. Their Khe Sanh campaign started some ten days before Tet.

From Da Nang, I Corps Commander Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam flew to the threatened city and ordered it placed in a state of emergency. All security and armed services as well as civil services were placed on a 100 per cent standby alert. He predicted that the city would have to meet a stiff challenge from the enemy forces. Martial law was proclaimed at the same time.

In the neighboring sub-sectors, all the combat elements were called in to defend their headquarters and to stand ready to rescue the city. In Trieu Phong district, a Rural Development task force was positioned at Bich Khe hamlet to block the enemy’s infiltration route to the district town.

Weapons were taken out of warehouses and distributed to civil servants and cadres. On Jan 28, the curfew, imposed from 2100h. through 0600h. was rigidly observed by the entire people. LTC Nguyen Am was apparently satisfied with the counter-offensive preparations and confident in the defense arrangements made. He toured several military installations including the newly built Ai Tu airfield, defended by a combined American Air Force and Engineering unit.

By and large, the Quang Tri city people led an austere life. The city’s only cinema was also its main public meeting place. It only showed old, obsolescent cheap films. Only a few shops with modest shelves served the entire community. Local people as well as occasional visitors regarded Quang Tri city as divorced from the central government of Saigon.

On the Tet Day’s afternoon the weeklong Tet truce was cancelled all over the First Corps area. The Quang Tri people could see even more clearly the signs of a major enemy ground offensive on their city. Enemy elements began to appear in the Hai Lang, Trieu Phong, Tri Buu and La Vang areas, sending thousands of local people panicking toward the city. A few families living near the city’s military installations and main thoroughfares moved to other areas inside the city.

For defense and counterattack, the friendly forces were positioned as follows:

- The 1st Infantry Regiment, led by Lt Col Nguyen Huu Hanh,
read from Long Hung to the M Zone, through La Vang and Thach

The 9th Airborne Battalion, freshly airlifted from Saigon as a reser­
ved force to help Quang Tri people enjoy a happy Tet, guarded the
anh Hoa Thon and Tri Buu areas.

Positioned closest to town was a combined special group of combat
hot) police and RD cademen.

At 0400h, on the second day of Tet or Jan 31, the enemy
leashed a heavy shelling barrage and a combined ground assault
on the city. The 8th NVA Regiment, infiltrated from north Vietnam
ly eight days earlier, participated in the battle.

Major enemy assaults were launched on the Tri Buu
area, about 1 km from the city, where enemy troops disguised them­
ves as ARVN paratroopers to swoop on an airborne platoon. But
ir plot was expeditiously uncovered by our paratroopers. The
posters had worn rubber tire sandals rather than the genuine
ngle boots.

In its assault on the De Tu area, which adjoined the
y jail, the enemy force overran an airborne platoon stationed in
anh Hoa Thon and got into the Tri Buu area. But it never succeeded
aching the jail, which had been overrun in the April 1967 assault
Quang Tri city. But in Hanh Hoa Thon, the airborne platoon suf­
ed serious casualties, trying to throw back the over whelming
emy force.

At the same time, the other enemy groups indiscrimi­
poly assaulted the city from various sides. Two enemy sapper
oons managed to fight their way into the city.

Combat police and Regional Forces troops on machine­
mounted trucks threw back all of the enemy assault waves
inst military and administrative structures.

As daylight dawned on the city, the enemy withdrew,
ng behind his dead. In the De Tu area near the jail hundreds of
odies were left behind to be seen by the crowds of civilians.

The civilian casualties were very light, probably
use all civilian houses had their own shelters and bunkers.

The enemy fired many 122mm rockets into the city but
inaccurate missiles missed their targets and caused no damage
ualties.
On the same second day of Tet, Jan 31, gunfire was heard from Tri Buu from dawn to dusk. From this predominantly Catholic village the enemy trained his machineguns on the city and fired almost continuously at the MACV compound, the helicopter landing pad, the Information Service and the RD office. He had overrun this village with two companies of the assault force.

In the afternoon, the local Vietnamese and American forces cancelled a planned counter-attack to recapture the village because too many civilians were still trapped there and could not readily leave. This was ascertained by the aerial reconnaissance from US planes of Ai Tu hamlet. These planes had met heavy enemy ground fire from machineguns positioned on top of the village's church.

Throughout the night of Jan 31 fighting broke out everywhere in the city. The weather was so bad that no flare support could be provided for the city's defenders. Only a few mortar-propelled flares were fired. Nevertheless the enemy still failed to penetrate any military installation.

On the following morning, Feb 1st, the enemy herded a number of women and children into a protest march toward the city, but the reluctant crowds were dispersed easily. The ground operations conducted by friendly troops with air support against the enemy forces in Tri Buu village lasted throughout most of the day and ended in the enemy withdrawing from Tri Buu. The war thus looked to be nearing an end for Quang Tri as the city was returning to normal.

While occupying Tri Buu the enemy rounded up a number of able bodied male villagers, civil servants and soldiers and compelled them to home leave but allowed women and children to evacuate the village. Then they tied all these male villagers to their gun positions. A good number of these defenseless people were killed and wounded during the friendly airstrike against enemy positions, along with some 100 enemy counted killed. The village was left in a shambles because of the battle. 80 per cent of the village's homes were damaged or destroyed, while its church was almost a complete loss.

On the night of Tet Day, Jan 30, the enemy shelled the 1st Infantry Regiment's headquarters compound and inflicted light damage to it. The populated areas of the city were only lightly damaged.

During the following days government troops conducted continuous sweep operations in town which resulted in eight communists captured. Seven of them were captured at the main bus station and were about 20 years old and natives of Thanh Hoa and Nghe An, while the other was of indeterminate origin.
Vietnam. The other was a local communist guerrilla, who suffered hungry and tired after two days of hiding in an underground duct.

The city slowly returned to normal. But on the night of Feb 10, the enemy launched an assault on the Roman Catholic hamlet of Duong Loc, about 12 kms north of the city. This hamlet had been a target of communist campaigns of terror and destruction, normally defended by a PF platoon which was strengthened that night by many students on Tet home vacation. The enemy committed a K8 Battalion plus two regional guerrilla companies to the attack. The attack began around five minutes past midnight but it was unsuccessful in breaking through the solid defense perimeter, which was vily defended with directional, fragmentary type claymore mines manned by determined militiamen and civilian people. The actual fight did not occur until 0800h the following morning and lasted one hour until most defenders ran out of ammunition and withdrew. A militia element led by Duong Minh Hoang was wiped out fighting a desperate rear guard battle to help the other militiamen escape unhurt from the storming enemy.

Yet the enemy was unable to occupy the hamlet because of the stubborn guerrilla type resistance of the hamlet residents, the booby traps and intricate alleyways inside the hamlet and, last but not least, artillery support. He was compelled to pull out of the hamlet soon after dark. Six militiamen were killed, a few others wounded, while the enemy suffered a larger number of casualties. Commander Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam helped the hamlet people build their defense force to a considerable extent soon after that battle.

An amateur writer, Le Nguyen Phuong, made the following comments on the 1968 Tet counter offensive in Quang Tri: "A tribute should be paid to the spirit of alertness of the Quang Tri government, which had timely prepared the local people emotionally and physically to cope with the enemy's offensive since the pressure began to make itself felt on the frontline areas of the city. Quang Tri was fortunate enough to be supported by two airfields, Dong Ha and Ai Tu, which could support each other in case one of them was put out of action. Furthermore, the Ai Tu airfield had a USAF engineer unit, which in times of need could become an active fighting element to help the city. What had squarely been the enemy's inability to mass infiltrate the city was the timely effective airstrikes provided by these two airfields".
As far as the enemy offensive was concerned the enemy failed in his two major objectives: occupying the city and paralyzing these two airfields.

The other major factors behind the enemy defeats were:

- Battalions 2/1 and 3/1 were conducting a support operations for the local rural development teams in the not distant Trieu Phong and Ha Lang areas;
- An airborne battalion had been airlifted to strengthen the city's defense perimeter in the Long Hung and Hanh Hoa hamlets;
- 1/1 Battalion supported by an APC squadron, was being stationed on the western side of the city; and
- The people's passive defense program was carried out with precision and effectiveness.

Were it not for these preparations Quang Tri as a frontline city, might not have been able to defend itself during the general offensive. The local government's and people's moral and physical preparedness and ability largely contributed to the enemy's defeat. Assaulting Quang Tri city, the enemy had operated in an entirely hostile area and was certainly bound to be defeated. If it was a strategic mistake of the enemy, it should be a permanent reminder for the rest of the country.
A usually common impression of the first time visitors about Da Nang city was that this was a place where people heard and talked pretty much about the war, but did not have to suffer too much from it.

Two major enemy assaults on Da Nang during the 1968 Tet offensive took place just outside Da Nang, not in Da Nang proper. The city was divided into three precincts or districts - Precinct I, Precinct II and Precinct III. Its defense perimeter arched from the foot of the Hai Van pass, past the city's two airbases, down to Nam Cuong villages. Only people residing along this arching perimeter bore the brunt of enemy assaults.

The first assault all started on the evening of Tet's Eve with the shelling of the Tra Kieu refugee camp, the Non Nuoc or Marble Mountain airbase. The enemy followed it up with a ground assault supported by 57mm recoilless cannons on the headquarters compound of the 1st Army Corps Command.

An estimated enemy company crossed the river from Hoa Cuong village and moved up to the compound. About a dozen enemy troops climbed up the compound's wall and entered the compound itself. No sooner had they reached the flagpole than the defenders opened fire cutting their retreating route as well as preventing further enemy infiltrators. The four armored vehicles guarding the place also maneuvered to encircle the trapped enemy while a recon squad engaged him inside the sprawling courtyard. Shortly before daybreak, the enemy managed to pull out with their yet unknown casualties, leaving the defenders caring for their casualties - three killed, seven wounded and two armored vehicles damaged lightly. An AK 47 automatic rifle was the only booty taken from the enemy.

The battle went by unnoticed by most of the city people, as the sounds of gunfire were drowned out by those of Tet firecrackers in every neighborhood.

As dawn broke over the city, a relief force was pulled together to conduct a sweep of the adjoining areas. It included the 1st Ranger Battalion the 3/51 Battalion and the 59th RF Battalion with four machineguns mounted light trucks. The sweep resulted in
five enemy killed, and six friendly troops killed, eight wounded. It ended before sundown and the city again virtually returned to normal.

On the morning of Tet Day or a few hours before the enemy broke contact, a number of civilians gathered at the provincial Buddhist pagoda and attempted to hold an anti-government march. Police rushed in and dispersed the crowd. Da Nang was immediately placed under a round-the-clock curfew and its garrison was placed on a 100 per cent stand by alert.

The enemy defeat was generally blamed on the assailant premature action - one day before schedule and while their main assault force was in the Thanh Khe and Dai Khe areas. It was also blamed for the ensuing defeat of the enemy in his second attempted assault on this sea and air base city.

The second attempted assault happened on the night of Tet Day or Jan 30. It started with an enemy attack on the perimeter outpost at the foot of Hai Van Pass. Counterattack and sweeps in the Nam O and Lien Chieu areas resulted in heavy fighting between the 5th Airborne Battalion and a battalion size element of the enemy 4th Regiment. This enemy element had been assigned to spearhead the first assault on Da Nang city but its tardy arrival affected adversly its fellow assault force on the night of Tet's Eve. The Nam O battle resulted in 150 killed and 18 captured by the airborne.

In addition to his attacks, the enemy conducted terror shellings against Da Nang. On the third day of Tet, he slammed twenty rounds of 122mm rocket fire into the Da Nang airbase. Two nights later, he slammed another 30 rounds of rocket fire into the airbase. The campaign caused the populace to engage in a shelter building spree which caused the price of sand bags to soar. At stages the bags were harder to find than food. Generally, observers could tell a rich from a poor Da Nang citizen, an average from a humble one, just by having a glance at his family's shelter.
Hoi An is the capital of Quang Nam province. Enemy started here at 0255 hours on January 30 or Tet eve, together with firecracker explosions and ARVN soldiers greeting Tet by firing their weapons.

Enemy utilized two battalions for the attack on this city, one attacked the position of 102nd Engineer Battalion, the other attacked Chi Lang camp, which is the former Quang Da Special Zone headquarters. At that time Chi Lang camp was the rear base of the 7th Infantry Regiment and the camp dispensary.

In these attacks civilians were herded by the enemy as a human shield for the assaults. They were intended to be used in a demonstration to force a change in the local government.

The enemy took half of the Engineer Battalion position before being stopped. The enemy force attacking Chi Lang camp overran the dispensary and was stopped at the position of the 51st Infantry Regiment by two artillery platoons who fired point-blank range at him.

Supported by APC's and a force of Korean troops the Sector Command made a counterattack. At 1000 hours friendly forces expelled the enemy from the Engineer Battalion position. The dispensary came under control of the friendly force at dark the same day.

The fighting in the city was over on the morning of January 31. Enemy mortar attack of military installations such as the artillery position at Dien Ban, Que Son districts and Ai Nghia bridge happened concurrently with his attack on the city. The city was sporadically pounded by mortar and 122mm rockets until the fifth day of February 4.

In the attack of the city enemy lost nearly 300 soldiers, 5 weapons including 12 crew-served weapons were captured.
Quang Tin

The enemy unleashed his offensive on Tam Ky city, provincial capital of Quang Tin, around 0400h, on the second day of Tet or Jan 31. He began the attack by firing mortars, recoilless cannons and rockets at all major administrative and military services and headquarters in the city. Then he followed it up with simultaneous ground assaults on the provincial administrative office, the sector command headquarters, the 6th Regiment Command headquarters, the 22nd Artillery Battalion command headquarters and the No 6 railroad level crossing.

Major enemy assaults were on the 6th Regiment command and 22nd Artillery Battalion compounds. After four human wave assaults, the enemy broke through two of the compounds defense lines, but was thrown back by the battalion's cannons firing straight at him. Around daybreak elements of the 6th Regiment launched a two-pronged counterattack which sent the enemy fleeing in disorder. A group of 38 enemy raised their hands and surrendered to the regiment troops. This was the largest single group of enemy soldiers to have ever surrendered in the 12th Tactical Area. Most of these captives were natives of north Vietnam and NVA soldiers.

The province administrative office and sector command headquarters were attacked from two sides, east and north. On the north side, the enemy was checked and then pinned down by heavy fire power from the defenders. The enemy force which stormed from the eastern side, succeeded in breaking through the outermost defense line, but that was about all. Shortly before daybreak, armored helicopters and armored vehicles came and forced the enemy to withdraw and leave behind hundreds of bodies and 31 wounded who were captured.

Sweep operations against enemy remnants were conducted throughout the second day of Tet. By nightfall, the city was calm again and almost back to normal.