citizens and himself to survive yet another enemy offensive. His morale was admirably high.

D. LESSONS LEARNED

Enemy tactical shortcomings:

First, began the attack too late - 0400 hours - therefore time of darkness was very short for his attack.

Second, lack of command and control between the force occupying the dominating area in the RF/PF training center which is located on the other side of the Tra Khuc river and his main force in the city, the main force (48th VC Regiment) was fragmented and annihilated, although they had enough time to withdraw.

Third, conducted raid with a superior force tactic but his preperatory fire was too weak and directed on too many objectives to be effective.

Thanks to these shortcomings friendly forces had time to brace themselves for their own defense and their later counterattack. The enemy suffered heavy casualty when attacking the 4th regimental base camps because of faulty coordination between the fire support base and the ground assault force.

The enemy, however, obtained the element of surprise by moving his troops into the city without being detected.

Friendly advantages were:

First, fast movement of armored vehicles to break up all enemy formations, armored vehicles mounted their counterattack only 20 minutes after the enemy initiated his offensive. The open area on Vo Tinh street facilitated the armored vehicle movement in performing their missions.

Second, although understrength because of Tet leave friendly forces took defensive measures beforehand and by quickly occupying fortified defensive positions effectively repelled enemy assaults. Some positions, however, were overrun because of lack of preparation.
A. - THE BALANCE SHEET

During the Tet offensive, Nha Trang as well as Qui
hon are two first coastal provinces which were unexpectedly attacked
by the enemy in the very midst of Tet truce - Tet eve. Nha Trang
eastern and western villages are composed of 119,000 people which
to total nearly 200,000 when the suburban people are included.

Nha Trang, like many other cities of South Vietnam,
suffered damage during the offensive but the damage here was relati­
ly less than in other cities. Civilian suffered 32 killed, 137 light
and severe wounded and 3,192 people were made homeless. An
estimated 600 houses were destroyed.

On military point of view, Nha Trang is an important
port with several installations and military camps. During Tet offen­
eve not a single allied installations was attacked. The enemy was
only attacking a few Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF)
stations and was able to break into the Sector Command, the
Provincial Administrative Headquarters and the 5th Logistics Command.
was repelled at other compounds.

The fighting lasted for two days but twelve hours after
offensive was initiated RVNAF regained complete control of the
area and twenty eight hours later every enemy was cleared from the
area.

The casualty lists of the two sides were as follows:

Friendly side : 88 killed and 220 wounded in action, 130 weapons
were lost including two which were crew served. Among those killed
were six officers, 17 noncoms, 2 PF squad leaders and 63 soldiers.
Those wounded included 9 officers, 12 noncoms, 3 squad leaders and
77 soldiers.

Enemy side : 377 killed, 76 captured, one surrendered, 196 weapons
were seized, including 23 crew served weapons.
Nam the attack was initially carried out over the enemy's positions. The enemy numbers were unknown, and no troop movements could be observed. According to intelligence reports, the enemy forces were not massed, but rather dispersed, which made it difficult to determine their exact strength. The Division began its attack on the evening of October 30, well before the lantern festival on the 31st, when the enemy force was expected to be dispersed. The North Vietnamese Army was not prepared, and the Tet offensive could not be mounted.

Local troops of the 1st Division, under General Le Van Dinh, were the first to make contact with the enemy. The initial mortar barrage lasted for about an hour, and the enemy troops returned fire. The attack was highly successful, with the enemy suffering heavy casualties.

Soon after, the enemy launched a counterattack. The local troops were not able to repel the enemy, and the situation deteriorated rapidly. The enemy troops rushed forward, taking advantage of the confusion caused by the initial mortar barrage. The enemy troops were able to break through the defenses and occupied several key positions. The situation was critical, and the enemy forces seemed to be gaining momentum.

The situation was further complicated by the arrival of additional enemy forces. The enemy troops were able to increase their numbers, and the situation became even more critical. The enemy forces were able to advance rapidly, and the local troops were forced to retreat. The situation was dire, and it was clear that the enemy was gaining the upper hand.

Nevertheless, the local troops held their ground and fought bravely. The enemy forces were able to break through the defenses, and the local troops were forced to retreat. The situation was critical, and the enemy forces were able to gain a foothold in the city. It was a difficult battle, and the enemy forces were able to advance rapidly.

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B. THE NHA TRANG BATTLE IN DETAIL.

Like their counterparts in other towns and cities of Viet Nam the top Nha Trang military commanders had anticipated the enemy's Tet offensive many hours before it really materialized. They did not know exactly how soon and when. Indications of major enemy troop movements toward the city limits confirmed earlier sketchy intelligence reports of the offensive plans.

First to be detected was the enemy's Regiment 18B reinforced by four sapper companies, four provincial mobile companies and one engineer company. All told the regiment had three combat battalions and 8 combat support companies. Well before Tet, the enemy stepped up his pressures on the outer perimeter of Nha Trang. The friendly forces, Vietnamese and Korean, retaliated with ground sweeps which covered tens of square kilometers. The 9th Korean (White Horse) Division bore the brunt of these sweeps. Enemy field commanders, also well before Tet, had to study and discuss the implementation of the North Vietnamese Communist Party's Resolution No 13 governing the enemy's Winter-Spring Campaign. This campaign included two stages - preparatory and offensive - to be carried out before, during and after Tet.

The enemy dared not launch the offensive before Tet. Local troop commander judged that the enemy would not be so shameless as to violate the Tet truce so blatantly and carry out the offensive during the period. They guessed that the enemy would launch the offensive sometime after the truce ended or soon thereafter. Their estimates proved wrong and the enemy capitalized handsomely on the factor of surprise - at least in the first few hours of the offensive.

The enemy started their offensive with the firing of six rounds of 82mm mortar on the Navy Training Center. All six shells landed outside the center. It was 35 minutes past midnight or 35 minutes after the Lunar New Year. Immediately after the shelling, flare ships from the 62nd Air Squadron became airborne. Counter-battery fire was also provided. Then it was all quiet again at least for a while.

It was not until 2 AM, or some 85 minutes after the initial mortar fire, that the enemy launched the infantry assault on the city. According to statements by a captured enemy mortar man the six mortar rounds should have been closely followed by the planned ground assault. The delay might have been caused by belated troop
movement into the city. The mortar crews in charge of supporting the assault were of company size, stationed just west of the airfield. They were elements of the enemy's 18B Regiment. They fired both 82mm mortars and 75mm recoilless rifles.

Nha Trang, like many other towns and cities of Vietnam, celebrated the holiday in a most tumultuous way. Days before Tet Day the people were ready to prepare the festivities. There was so much shopping that many shops sold out their wares as early as three days before the holiday really started. A pack of some 100 firecrackers costs the consumer 80, then 100 and then 150 piastres. This was the first Tet in eight years where the central government in Saigon allowed everyone to enjoy the traditional firecrackers.

By the time both the local and central governments were fully aware of enemy general offensive plans against all towns and cities it was too late to persuade people to abstain from setting off firecrackers. The explosions of firecrackers sound almost like those of many small arms.

Nha Trang's downtown streets were still crowded by midnight on Tet's Eve. The crowds of merrymakers were far larger than those noticed on preceding Tets. This alone encouraged people to set off even more firecrackers than usual. The firecrackers confused the situation when the enemy fired his mortars signaling the ground assault. The lack of vigilance among the troopers added to the confusion. After Province Chief Lt Col Le Khanh hurried back to his headquarters from a traditional religious service at Thap Ba shrine the mortar shells hit the city.

According to enemy documents and captives' statements the enemy committed an estimated 800 men to the ground assault. These men were divided into two groups, the first with some 500 men and the second with 300.

Group I included the 7/18B Battalion with 200 men, the Sapper Company T88 with 60 men, the Engineer Company T89 with 30 men, the Sapper company K90 with 26 men, the Sapper Company K91 with 30 men, the Sapper Company K92 with 11 men, the 82mm Mortar and 75mm Recoilless Rifle Company with 50 men, the Nha-Trang Guerrilla Platoon with 14 men, the command and support personnel, staff with ten men and women, and an estimated 100 town-based underground agents. This group had partly infiltrated the city several days before the actual assault started. They infiltrated by twos, threes of
An ICC team inspecting material found on a dead Viet Cong.
larger bands of people lived in towns, and regular attacks on their underpopulated areas larger parts of their war zone.

The city's western railroad station, the eastern section of Khanh Hoa Province, the Team III soldiers of the 551st Signal Battalion, stockade and northern sector of Bong Bridge, School; Team 8/18B Battalion was to block this mission.

The 9/18B Battalion moved into the area.

Dien Khanh was a peaceful place, herding civilians and animals and enjoying a strong touch of community. The enemy areas, which were tied to the Hoa Dam areas on the left bank and on the Cong river, received information and support for the two marches. Marches had been called for Democracy in the name of Vietnam and...
larger bands using forged identification. The underground agents had lived in town for some time or had been city residents with adequate and regular identifications. This was the first time they surfaced from their underground status in order to openly fight city defenders. The larger part of this Group emerged from the Dong Bo (Ox Field) jungle war zone.

Group I split into five task teams: Team I attacking the city's western section with the radio station, the Ngo Quyen Camp, the railroad station area and water Tank Hill; Team II striking the city's eastern section with the provincial administration headquarters, the Khanh Hoa Sector Command and the Fifth Logistics Command compound; Team III striking the city's southwestern section with the camps of the 651st Signals Company, the 51st Transportation Battalion, the army stockade and the Pontoon Engineer Company; Team IV attacking the northern section of the city with the mission of blowing up the Xom Bong bridge and blocking reinforcement from the Noncom Training School; Team V serving as the artillery support unit.

Group II included only two companies of the understrength 8/18B Battalion with a combined total of about 300 men. Its assignment was to block government reinforcement and relief troops. It performed this mission in the Binh Cang area.

In addition the enemy also kept two reserve companies of the 9/18B Battalion to bolster the 8/18B Battalion in case the latter moved into town.

The enemy's subsidiary political and agit-prop units in Dien Khanh district, according to enemy documents, were assigned to herd civilians in and out of town and into anti-government demonstrations and riots. Their purpose was to give the enemy ground offensive a strong touch of a people's revolution to overthrow the local government. The enemy had planned to conduct four such demonstrations which were to start from the Phuong Cui, Phuong Sai, Cau Ha and Cho Dam areas outside the city. These demonstrations were to converge on the Cong Hoa (Republican) Square which was opposite the province's information service building. In addition the enemy planned to lead two marches from the city's suburbs into town. These and other marches had been conceived to bolster the proposed Khanh Hoa Alliance for Democracy and Peace and to demand that the allied troops pull out of Vietnam and "stop interfering in Vietnamese affairs".
The enemy field commanders and ranking political leaders and agents had been informed of the Nha Trang offensive plans during an elaborate political study conference held in the Dong Bo war zone from Jan 21 to 25, 1968. This was about a week before Tet.

The enemy troops were ordered to follow the plans at all costs, and among other things, not to start the ground action until the mortar company gave the go-ahead. The 85 minute delay in the enemy ground assault was thought to have been caused by movement difficulties encountered somewhere between his jungle bases and staging areas.

Team I of Group I struck the city's radio station from the provincial pagoda Tinh Hoi where its 240 men had rendezvoused at midnight. The team occupied the Buddha Statue or water tank Hill and quietly set up its command on top of the hill. This team included the Sapper Company T88, the Company 2/7/18B, elements of the 75mm recoilless cannon company and political cadre. The Team was detected by friendly troops guarding the radio station and neighboring office buildings sometime before the actual assault on the station was launched.

The radio station's security guards numbered about 20 men from the 381st RF Company led by Master Sergeant Dao Huu Ngoc, a seasoned soldier with a nineteen years of military service. The enemy's infiltration of the station area was first noticed by Corporal Le Van Thang who saw two Lambretta minibuses with ARVN uniformed passengers hurriedly disembarking and furtively moving into the nearby pagoda compound. The corporal radioed the Special Zone Command for a check on the identity of these "soldiers". His telephone line with his immediate superiors at the sector command had been cut off probably by enemy agents. When the answer over the PRC 10 identified the "soldiers" as enemy the corporal told his men to go to battle stations. He himself manned a light machinegun from an elevated bunker. He fired a few shots into an open field opposite the station to test the suspect soldiers. They immediately returned the fire. These return shots were enough to tell foes from friends since the soldiers were taught to return fire instinctively against the area from which hostile fire originated. That was the extent of this brief exchange of gunfire. Calm returned to the area, however, tension inside the radio station built up. It was about 30 minutes past midnight.

The defenders of the radio station waited and waited until about 3 AM when the enemy launched the assault on the station. The enemy concentrated his push on the right side of the station deploying B40 rockets to break through its defense. The firefight lasted about two hours. The enemy fire killed three, wounded the Command and the Company Commander before he occupied the hill. He was two layers of defenses. The station was under heart. The corporal was killed, killing three and then seized the station in a few minutes. The team's 130 men then enveloped the compound and from the Long Xuyen bases. The corporal's radio had been moved to a second minibus.

The radio station was under fire from the duty officer's headquarters. Master Sergeant Le Van Thang reconnoitered the area on his jeep, while the enemy concentrated his fire on the elevator. The defenders escaped to the next building but two men were killed. The defenders returned fire against the area from which hostile fire originated. Calm returned to the area, however, tension inside the radio station built up. It was about 30 minutes past midnight.

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two hours. During this time airdropped flares illuminated the battle area for the defenders. The enemy could never break through any defense lines. Shortly before daybreak he withdrew into neighboring civilian houses. From these houses he took potshots at the defenders' positions. Several enemy bodies were left behind and scattered all over the place.

The enemy did not surprise the radio station guards when he occupied the Buddha Statue or water tank Hill. He did surprise the hill's small militia guard detail. None of the five militiamen stationed there was aware of the enemy occupation of the hill until 3 AM, when an army 3rd Lieutenant happened to take a motor bike ride up the hill and then fled as he noticed the enemy presence there. He was killed before he could escape. Some of the Lieutenant's fellow celebrants were also hit. Others escaped.

Alerted by the gunfire the five militiamen reacted. But it was two late. The numerically superior enemy gunned them all down, killing three and wounding two then occupying the entire hill. The enemy then set up his heavy weapons on the hill and opened up at the radio station in support for his assault force, but to no avail. The solidly entrenched radio station defenders stood their ground.

Meanwhile Team II struck the sector command compound. Its 130 men were elements of the sapper companies K90; K91 and K92, and the Company 3/7/18B. It assaulted the sector command, the province administrative headquarters and the 5th Logistics Command compound around 2 AM. The companies K90 and K91 with 56 men moved from the Lo Voi area aboard a small bus and three Lambretta minibuses. These apparently were robbed from civilians. The K92 with 11 men moved in from Binh Cang area on Highway I aboard a Lambretta minibus.

The K90 and K91 men killed four soldiers and wounded two duty officers at the sector command and province administrative headquarters. Lt Lan and 2nd Lt Phuc were the 2 officers wounded. Master Sergeant Pham, the province chief's body guard, was on a jeep reconnaissance when he heard firing. He was cut down the moment he was on his jeep to investigate. K92 men killed the front gate guard at the 5th Logistics Command compound. They entered the compound and killed eleven men and wounded eight. Those killed included three officers, Lt Nguyen Se, 3rd Lt Chu and 2nd Lt Trinh Ba Tuan. The detail chief, Master Sergeant Nguyen Nhon, was also killed.
Lt Tuan was killed while sleeping. After daybreak the 5th Log. Deputy Chief of Staff for Polwar Major Duong Van Sang, thinking the enemy had withdrawn after the assault, as was his custom, came to the compound with some of his men to recover them for medical vacuation. Enemy troops allowed his men to do this. The Major entered even further into the compound before the enemy opened fire. The Major was killed instantly by a burst of submachine gun fire. He was killed near the flagpole in the middle of the compound.

Around 2 AM the enemy's Team III with 3 men of Company 1/7/18B, a squad of the Sapper Company T88 and the Nha Trang Politico-Admin Platoon assaulted the 651st Signal Battalion's base camp. The assault force, supported by heavy weapon fire, tried to go through the main gate but was thrown back. In the early minutes of the enemy assault two noncoms and one officer were wounded.

The enemy's Team IV, for unknown reasons, did not carry out its assigned mission on Tet's Eve.

One of the city's main military camps, the Special Command compound was not attacked. From this compound the commander, General Doan Van Quang closely followed the enemy's every move from its beginning. He directed the counterattack which took one hour later. General Quang was also Commander of the Nha Trang City garrison and of the Nha Trang Special Zone. He had authority to commit any Vietnamese units stationed in and outside the city.

Spearheading the counterattack was the 91st Airborne Ranger Battalion. This Battalion had returned to its Nha Trang base only two days before for rest and recuperation following long sweep operations in Pleiku. Only 60 per cent of its personnel were physically able to carry out combat duties in Nha Trang. During the counterattack four of five of the battalion's commanders were killed. The high casualty rate shows that the leaders led by preceding their troops. Among the battalion leaders killed were the Battalion Commander, Maj Le Ngoc Tu, who died of a serious small arms wound some 23 days after he was hit on Tet Day; the battalion's 4th Company Commander, Lt Do Thach; the Deputy Battalion Commander, and two company commanders were wounded and hospitalized. The understrength battalion suffered a total of 18 killed and 32 wounded. Unquestionably this battalion had saved Nha-Trang from devastating destruction similar to that which had
occurred in many other cities and towns of the country. The 91st Airborne Ranger Battalion played a key and decisive role in curtailing the Nha Trang Battle in a surprisingly short period of time. They drove the enemy out of the city far sooner than generally expected.

The Special Forces Command also had four CIDG companies in addition to the 91st Airborne Ranger Battalion. Three of these companies were deployed out of town and the fourth was performing routine garrison chores in town.

When the news of the enemy ground offensive reached the Command headquarters it reacted like this:

0230 hours: Immediately after the 651st Signal Battalion came under attack the 62nd Air Squadron was ordered to drop flares. Fifteen minutes later, a CIDG company was sent to block the enemy's assault route against the second zone of the sensitive area, to protect the west side of the signal battalion's position, the stockade and the radio station.

Noncom military school was ordered to move one company to block Xom Bong bridge. The 2nd Corps coast guard was requested to increase patrolling along the coast off the Province headquarters (enemy was suspected of moving by boat).

0300 hours: Informed of the enemy assaults on the sector compound and the province administration, lost telephone and radio contact with these installations (At the province administration headquarters there was one special radio set up linking it to Special Force Command. The PRC.10 radio was destroyed by enemy who killed its custodian, Master Sergeant Pham, who died assisting the enemy assaults into his radio room). The news confused command even further. No decision.

0315 hours: Assigned a company from the 91st Airborne Ranger Battalion to stand by as a reserve unit inside the SF command compound. Placed another company of this same battalion on alert.

0345 hours: A police force reported that it had been attacked at the sector compound; Special Police reported enemy assaults on the sector and the Special Police headquarters and called reinforcements.

0400 hours: Released the two Airborne Ranger companies to rescue the Special Police Headquarters and the sector compounds.
These two companies easily relieved the enemy pressure on the police compound. The two companies, reinforced by a police detail led by the police chief, an army major, moved along Doc Lap and then Phan Boi Chau streets to assault the 5th Logistics headquarters compound. They then moved on to the sector compound a block away. Upon reaching this compound the relief force received fierce enemy fire and was pinned down. This fire hit the Airborne Ranger Battalion commander, Major Le Nhu Tu. Enemy fire power was so strong that the Special Zone Command had to send another Airborne Ranger Company to relieve the enemy pressure.

At the same time the enemy was still occupying the Buddha Statue Hill. They were also surrounding the radio station and threatening the positions of the signal battalion, the transportation battalion's pontoon engineer company and the stockade. This stockade also served as the city jail which contained some 2,000 inmates. To include political prisoners.

The enemy continued firing from neighboring civilian houses, gardens and the Buddha Statue Hill. On this hill he had set up his advance assault command. This unit was tasked to initiate civil disturbances as soon as the city's key military and administrative agencies had been taken over. For this and other purposes the enemy forbade people to evacuate their houses. Many of the people managed to get out of the fighting areas anyhow. At this time the city looked like a ghost town. All the streets were deserted. Those private houses which were not occupied by the enemy were firmly closed as were minor government offices left untouched.

The 554th CIDG Company was then assigned to rescue the Buddha Statue Hill. This company, reinforced by a CIDG platoon commanded by company commander Lt. Col. Ha Minh Trung. From daybreak till 2 PM there was fighting all over the hill and pagoda area. The CIDG men supported by airstrikes reached three assaults to retake the entire area and relieve the enemy pressure on the radio station and adjoining compounds. Thirteen enemy bodies were left behind.

The two CIDG companies, which were ordered to proceed from their night positions four kilometers northwest of Nha Trang to rescue the city, were engaged by the enemy's Battalion 8/18B on the city's outskirts. Airstrikes were called in and the ensuing battle lasted in 30 enemy killed, nine captured and 20 assorted weapons.
The CIDG companies suffered seven killed and ten wounded. The decimated enemy battalion withdrew to the west.

On Tet Day morning, Jan 30, enemy agents marshalled a civilian demonstration with about 200 banner and flag-waving people from Dien Khanh district. The crowd dispersed swiftly after its Communist leaders were shot and arrested. Among the leaders were two enemy agitation-propaganda agents.

The enemy positioned in neighboring civilian houses still fired harassment fire on the defenders of the radio station whose ammunition stocks were running dangerously low. By mid morning each of the defenders only had an average of thirty rounds per man. The guard leader, Master Sergeant Ngoc, sent one of his men out of the station to the logistics company compound to ask for ammo supplies. The man was caught halfway and killed by the enemy. One of the trapped civilian employees of the radio station, Mr Nguyen Dong, volunteered to do the risky job. He took a brief handwritten note from Sgt Ngoc to the logistics men and some two hours later, around noon, one truck managed to make its way into the partly besieged radio station with some 7,000 rounds. The defenders almost emptied their guns of the last rounds of ammo in order to provide fire cover for their buddies who were bringing the ammo in from the truck which was an enemy target at this time. The resupply really saved the station's guard that night when the enemy attacked again to seize the station. The assault was thrown back without much difficulty.

The enemy force of about 21 men was almost wiped out the province administrative headquarters compound, though it had proceeded in entering it. The province chief, LTC Khanh, and his family were at their residence, inside the compound during the entire night. The enemy apparently did not believe the province chief lived in so small a house well inside the compound. The enemy left the house untouched LTCKhanh took his wife and their four children into an inner bunker where they stayed until he brought them out aboard an armored car around nine o'clock the following morning, Tet Day. After taking his wife and children to the bunker, LTC Khanh and his four bodyguards swiftly manned the compound's only two armored personnel carriers. One of the two carriers could not move, its battery were dead so it had to stay in place and strafe at the advancing enemy. The other carrier did an even more beautiful job and accounted for the larger part of the 17 enemy killed. The remaining four enemy chose to fight from inside the province administrative office.
building. Unfortunately for the enemy none of them had any B40 rocket launchers to deal with the colonel's armored carriers. The carriers had a field day maneuvering up and down the compound. The colonel borrowed these two carriers from the 5th Logistics Command only a few days earlier in order to strengthen the defense of his headquarters.

At day break one element of the Mike Forces appeared at the frontgate of the compound. LTC Khanh moved out and briefed the American group commander on the situation and requested a ground assault against the four enemy diehards. The Americans called air strikes in instead and the air action resulted in setting fire to the building. After getting his wife and children out of their bunkers LTC Khanh and his few men joined the friendly forces to counterattack the enemy positions at the sector compound. This compound was across the road from the province administrative headquarters.

Around 0900h, one enemy reinforcement unit, the Company 2/7/18B also moved into town. It moved down Hoang Hoa Tham Street and attempted to occupy the multi-storied building of the Social Welfare Service. The service chief Mr Phan Ngoc Tien, noticed the enemy coming and hurriedly closed all of building's steel doors and windows. Then he fired a pistol shot at the enemy. Strangely enough, the enemy failed to return fire and moved hurriedly to the adjoining Chieu Hoa Service and the private home of a former province chief, Luong Ngoc Uy. From there the enemy opened fire on the American MP's headquarters on the opposite side of the street. The American and Korean troops returned fire and the gunfight cost the enemy 37 killed. Poor Mr Uy, who was trapped in his own house, was also killed. The remaining enemy troops moved down Trung Nu Vuong Street but were intercepted by a combined police and army ordnance force which killed six enemy in front of the Agricultural Affairs Service Office. The survivors of this enemy reinforcement column simply fled for their own lives into neighboring civilian houses and residential sections. The Airborne Rangers employed two M113 armored personnel carriers in their attempt to destroy the last enemy holdouts. There were at least four of them inside the province administrative office building. The carriers were borrowed from the 5th Logistics Command but had no drivers. Some Airborne Rangers improvised as drivers. One of the carriers was mishandled, jumped backward instead of forward; and accidentally injured the deputy commander of the 91st SFA Battalion. Three of four enemy were killed in one group which was sheltering itself under a table. The fourth died sitting on top of a chest of file drawers from which he had been firing at government troops. Moments later the
Office building was set a fire in the unwanted airstrike called in by the US Mike Force.

Continuing to move the Airborne Rangers then assaulted the enemy positions in the sector compound and recaptured it around 1400h. They wiped out the entire enemy force except for one diehard who mysteriously fled under the cover of darkness. Before fleeing he wounded several government troops by sniping from a water tank towering over the sector command compound. Troops returned fire on him earlier in the afternoon but missed.

At 4 o'clock in the afternoon the government troops regained control of the entire Nha Trang city. Their ensuing actions were only sweep operations against enemy remnants hiding in civilian houses.

There was no fighting throughout the second day of Tet, March 31, until midnight. At this time the enemy regrouped his forces and staged desperate assault on the radio station and the Ngo Quyen Camp, which housed the Engineer Signal and Transportation units.

For the first time in the two-day-old Nha Trang battle American gunships (armed helicopters) entered the picture, providing close air support for the defenders. The fighting resulted in over 100 enemy bodies left behind and many weapons. Eleven defenders were killed and 57 wounded.

On the night of 31st, the enemy recaptured the Buddha Statue Hill from the Airborne Rangers who had taken it the preceding day. This time the airborne had to call in air support in order to recapture this position. The remnants of the enemy fled downhill and fled into neighboring houses from which they delivered cross fire on the pursuing airborne troops. The latter took heavy casualties at this stage of the battle. Airstrikes eventually wiped out the entire enemy force.

Beginning from February 1st and the days following, the local command mounted coordinated sweep operations against enemy remnants still hiding in residential areas. The sweep forces included Vietnamese and allied troops. The sweep itself was extended to the suburbs and periphery of the city and as far out as the enemy's jungle base of Dong Bo.

Enemy remnants, for the most part were captured without offering any resistance to the sweep forces. Many of those who surren-
VC agents captured in Nhatrang

From left to right: 1. Huynh Tuong, Commissar for Khanh Hoa and Deputy Party Secretary for Nhatrang, 2. Duong Tan Dat, 40, Military Commander with 17 years of party life, 3. Trang Thi Suong Thanh, 22, propaganda cadre, 4. Cao Tan Di alias Phong, 26, Chief sapper agent for Nhatrang.
were NVA soldiers who had gotten lost in the city's labyrinth of lanes, alleys and back alleys. Many disguised themselves as civilians. The sunburn traces that their autotire sandals had left on their feet betrayed them to the security men at check points. Nha Trang citizens played a major role as intelligence agents in helping government troops capture many of the enemy survivors. Six of these survivors, hiding in the house of a bread vendor were captured because of the information given the government troops by the vendor. Enemy bodies were left scattered around all the places which had come under enemy assault. Most of the bodies still carried a small plastic-covered sign "Determined To Win" around necks. The signs were written in hand with blue ball pens. They looked very young and were between 16 and 20 years old. They wore assorted plain civilian clothes and uniforms. They also wore the familiar rubber sandals carved out of old autotires, called Ho Chi Minh sandals. This was the first time in the war that the people of Nha Trang had the opportunity to have a close look at a large number of enemy bodies. Many were shocked, saying the Communists employed children to fight the war. It was the first time also that they saw so many enemy captured in action. There were 7 of them, including 12 officers. Many of these enemy soldiers and agents had been captured thanks to the information provided by local civilians. Among the captured were Huynh Tuong, chief of the underground administration of Khanh Hoa province and concurrently deputy secretary to the VC chief of Nha Trang; Junior Captain Duong Tan Dat, Nha Trang city commander; Junior Captain Huynh Ngo, deputy chief of Khanh Hoa Military proselyting section; Lt Le Trong Cach, Khanh-Hoa Guerrilla Training section's deputy chief; and Huynh Chieu, Khanh Hoa Guerrilla force commander. Most of the other prisoners had been members of the enemy companies 1/7/18B and 2/7/18B and Sapper Company K90. Confessions by the major prisoners led to the elimination of many city-based enemy secret cells between Jan 30 and Feb 20. Fifty such secret agents were arrested. Among those arrested were Do Van Bi alias Phong in charge of in-town sapper operations; Nguyen To alias Quyet in charge of forming underground cells; and Dang Phu in charge of supervising subversive actions. All three held the rank of Nha Trang city council members. Many of the others had charge of supplies logistics, intelligence, espionage, terrorism and so on. There were also four students who were in charge of spreading propaganda.

The city-based enemy infrastructure was thus virtually eliminated. It would take him a long time to build up another underground
operation network. He may never be able to do so.

C. IN THE WAKE OF THE OFFENSIVE.

The offensive brought about a lot of changes to the outward appearances of Nha Trang city. To some extent the frame of mind and thinking of the citizens also underwent drastic changes. The city ceased to be a place for fun. Fun seekers became a rare sight in the area. The city assumed the grim look of austerity and determination.

Bunkers, trenches and other types of combat positions were built all over the city. They were built at strategic street intersections and at the foot of lampposts. More sandbagged bunkers, barbed wire fences and mobile roadblocks were set up around military and administrative installations. Checkpoints manned by police, troops and popular militia were busy checking papers of passersby and travellers. An aggressive and offensive spirit was very much in evidence. Combat ready troops and police were seen almost everywhere in town and suburbs. Patrols and brief home searches were frequent occurrences in many areas of the city.

Public servants, civilian cadres and just plain citizens were organized into groups. The people's self-defense force (PSDF) was strengthened by bringing together all civilians not associated with the regular defense agencies. This force, numbering over 1,000 men, was given brief training in weapon and security matters. Membership included men up to the age of 45 years. Forty per cent of the members were given weapons which they rotated with the remaining sixty per cent. Their public appearance was made in a ceremony on Feb 23, 1968 at which 22 officers, noncoms and troopers and policemen who had distinguished themselves in action during the enemy's offensive were decorated.

In addition the people, like those in many other cities and towns, engaged in a feverish campaign of sandbag shelter building. This activity caused the prices of sand bags and labor to go upwards. The people were also given sufficient instruction on how to behave in case the enemy assaulted the city again. Therefore when they hear shouts of people or see the police hunting a Viet Cong agent down their street they shut their doors and windows. They do this to prevent the enemy from invading their homes rather than out of panic. The curfew was scrupulously observed. For several weeks after the end of the offensive streets became almost deserted shortly after dark.

Over 3,500 people, many of them pupils of Vy Ha school in Vuon Uom village, were dedicated to the radio station, which was housed in a school building and church. They manned the public buildings and streets. The people had set up a number of sandbagged shelters, built fences and dug ditches to anything the enemy could throw. Although the shelters looked like something out of a movie, the people were determined to fight for their homes and lives, to resist the enemy and stop his march towards starvation, to stop the enemy's march to the villages, to destroy the enemy's people.

The enemy agencies in the town in cash resources and man power were destroyed. The Vietnamese physicians and doctors threw themselves into the service of the sick and wounded. They worked day and night and even the dead were brought to the hospital to rebuild their bodies.

This relief was a help to the people who owned automobiles, food and daily goods. The local government, in addition to the provision of electricity, water and food, provided the people with transportation and cars for the people. The people were able to go to their homes and rebuild them. The former homes were made to move some distance.

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Other consequences of the Tet fighting were really sad. Over 3,500 persons or some 600 families were made homeless, many of them penniless. These people were former residents of the areas of Xom Uom, Xom Con, Dong Nai, Lu Gia, the railroad station, the radio station and the army stockade. These areas were made a shambles by the action of both friend and foe. The homeless were temporarily housed in public buildings such as government offices, schools, pagodas and churches — any structures that were spared by the fighting. These public buildings were turned into refugee centers. There were seven of them. These were not enough to house all the unfortunate people. Many people had to live under makeshift tents which were an assembly of any material ranging from half-burned pieces of wood boards, iron roofing, worn out ponchos given by soldiers or traded in the blackmarket, to anything that could possibly protect them from sunshine. These makeshift shelters made the courtyards of schools, churches and pagodas look like stone-age tribal hamlets. It was generally a pitiful sight. As a matter of fact, however, none of the refugees were starved or died of starvation as food and other supplies were provided regularly. Epidemics and deadly diseases were the threats hanging over the heads of the people.

Each refugee family received from government welfare agencies and private charities somewhere between 500 and 3,000 piastres in cash relief plus other emergency supplies. Vietnamese and foreign physicians made daily visits and provided medical care and medicine to the sick and weak. Information workers regularly showed movies at night and gave out reading materials. In the meantime the government distributed cement and iron roofing to victim families to help them rebuild their homes in areas where they had lived before.

Nearly 200 families in the nursery area were given similar help to rebuild their houses. They had been squatters in this government owned area. Because they were the hardest-hit people in the city, the local government finally decided to give a plot of land to each family. In addition the government gave cement, iron roofing and highly specialized services such as ground levelling and rubble clearing with bulldozers. These people for the first time in their life, became owners of their homes and lands. These homes were generally better than their former homes. These gifts freed them from the fear of being forced to move somewhere else at some future date.

Victims in other areas also benefited from this relief. This relief program encouraged them to complete reconstruction of
their houses on or even before schedule. The people's virtue of traditional hard-work and moral endurance added to this achievement and saved the local administration some difficulties and troubles.

D. LESSONS LEARNED.

The greatest advantages enjoyed by the enemy before and during the offensive were derived from the long Tet truce and the lifting of the curfew on Tet's Eve. These actions resulted in a lack of vigilance among outpost garrisons, checkpoint security men and the fun-loving populace. This state of affairs led to sharp drops in the inflow of intelligence reports. The enemy took advantage of all these things to secretly move his combat troops, sapper and political agents into the city to launch the surprise raids on military and government agencies. This allowed them to inflict heavy casualties upon some nonvigilant garrisons and to take over populated areas almost without firing a shot. The reduced garrison strength, resulting from excessive Tet home leaves which were granted by commanding officers, also accounted for the enemy successes in the early hours of the offensive and for the inability of the defenders to conduct the counterattacks. Combat weary troops just back from the battle fields for a rest were ordered to launch counterattacks which challenged their depleted strength.

The enemy also made enough serious mistakes to make their offensive a miserable flop. First, he was so openly confident in his victory that he underestimated the defenders' will and ability to react and defeat him. Second, overestimated his popular support to such a degree that he thought he could hold the so-called anti-government mass rallies in town. Third, he assumed the Khanh Hoa sector command to be the only nerve center of the province. Consequently he believed that its seizure would immediately demoralize the other governmental army units into surrendering or defecting. Fourth, many of the enemy field commanders doubted the feasibility of the offensive plan and therefore there was a serious lack of coordination among enemy assault units.

The fourth point was verified by the testimony of all twelve enemy officers captured, including Huynh Tuong, Nha Trang (enemy) deputy political commissar and Khanh Hoa political commissar. This 40-year-old, frailly built Communist commander told his captors and reporter Hong Duong that he had never believed that takeover of Nha Trang City was possible with the modest assault force of 800 men. This assault plan was still vague to regard the troops must attack. One the 20th day commissar informed offensive schedule with larger force plan was disclosed on Jan 24, or six days all of those matters about the high were coincident with questioned Zon, the plan. The movements from old and the B/181 sector of the offensive fully committed. Pressed to come additional man, and them up, and The enemy also made enough serious mistakes to make their offensive a miserable flop. First, he was so openly confident in his victory that he underestimated the defenders' will and ability to react and defeat him. Second, overestimated his popular support to such a degree that he thought he could hold the so-called anti-government mass rallies in town. Third, he assumed the Khanh Hoa sector command to be the only nerve center of the province. Consequently he believed that its seizure would immediately demoralize the other governmental army units into surrendering or defecting. Fourth, many of the enemy field commanders doubted the feasibility of the offensive plan and therefore there was a serious lack of coordination among enemy assault units.

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800 men. This was his impression when he was first informed of the
assault plan some three months earlier. He said the offensive schedule
was still vague in early January 1968 or roughly a month before the
offensive actually was to take place. Then he attended an offensive
plan discussion in the Dong Bo war base where his superiors told him
to regard the rural and urban assault tasks as equal, meaning that his
troops must assault the cities and the countryside at the same time.
One the 20th of January, ten days before the actual offensive, a zonal
commissar identified as Lam came to the war base and revealed the
offensive scheme. He said the plan must be carried out simultaneously
with larger forces to be committed to assaults on towns and cities. The
plan was discussed in minute detail for three consecutive days ending
Jan 24, or six days before the actual offensive. Tuong said most if not
all of those military commanders and political chiefs present worried
about the high risks of such an action, even though it was timed to
coincide with the Tet truce. Several of the leaders, Tuong included,
questioned Zonal Commissar Lam about the wisdom and feasibility of
the plan. The commissar's answers were promises of troop reinforce­
ments from other provincial guerrilla units, namely a rocket company
and the B/18B and 9th Battalions. These never showed up at any stage
of the offensive. Lam also told his men that American troops were
fully committed in the Khe Sanh - A Shau Valley operations and so on.
Pressed to commit himself even more clearly on his promises of
additional manpower, Lam quoted Mao T' s T ung's sayings to hush
them up, and for the purpose of injecting some belief in a full victory.
Another topic of Lam's presentation was an outline of what he called
the (Hanoi's Communist) Party's "Second Front" theory. According
to this theory the NLF should cease to be a political instrument in favor
of another organization, the Alliance for Democracy and Peace and
confine its activities to military field only. This piece of sophistry
perplexed most of the leading political and military cadremen present.
This news dumbfounded them but they had received an order and there
could be no further questioning it, Tuong added.

The enemy's attack plan against Nha Trang contained
several more shortcomings. The fifth point was the general ignorance
of the geography of the city and its maze of alleys and lanes by the
assault unit leaders. This caused many enemy to elect holding out to
die rather than withdrawing. Others were eventually either lost or
captured. The sixth shortcoming of the enemy was his poor intelligence
about the actual size of several garrisons. This caused him not to
attack several lightly guarded installations, such as the radio station.
It also caused failure to exploit the factor of surprise at other points. These failures gave the defenders plenty of time to mount their counterattacks.

The defenders despite several major mistakes, enjoyed several advantages. First, all units were operating under one command. This precluded faulty coordination of the counterattacks and waste of manpower. The reestablishment of control over the situation in roughly twelve hours can best be attributed to the clocklike precision of most of these operations. The second advantage was the presence of the 91st Airborne Ranger Battalion, which had recently returned for a rest and recuperation tour in town. The high mobility of the Special Forces units involved was also an advantage.

These Special Forces Battalions which had been positioned out of the city during the Tet truce were called in to rescue the embattled city. They were ordered to move back to their home base and reacted swiftly.

The third advantage of the defenders resulted from the excellent handling of the prisoners of war, most of whom were war-weary and disillusioned. The prisoners gave valuable information which led to the capture of important Communist agents based in the city and to the destruction of their cells. It may take the enemy several months or even years to build up another operational secret infrastructure inside Nha Trang. He may never be able to do so.

The fourth advantage enjoyed by government troops was the aloof attitude of the people toward enemy calls for mass demonstrations and riots as well as their high sense of discipline during the counterattacks by the defenders.

The fifth significant point was the high fighting morale of some of the defensive units such as the 20 guards at the radio station and the counterattacking forces.
Qui Nhon

Since colonial days Qui Nhon city has been the main gate for the supply of seaborne commodities for a large portion of the Central Vietnam highlands. The expansion of its port facilities and the completion of the repair works on Highway 19 have established the vital economic and strategic importance of the city even more clearly. This highway links Qui Nhon to Pleiku and leads to Kontum in the North and Banmethuot in the South.

The enemy as early as 1965, attempted to take over the city or at least make it the country's worst troublespot. He failed miserably in the face of the determined pacification drives by the Allied and local forces stationed there. In early 1967 Qui Nhon became one of the almost places in the country. Civilian life returned to normal even in the rural areas several miles around the city. Towns people, working for Allied and Vietnamese government agencies, were better off than at any other time.

In the face of the overwhelming superiority of the friendly forces the 18th Viet Cong Regiment had to break up into small units and melt away into remote rural areas. The Regiment avoided all major engagements. The enemy tried to fight a major battle in Qui Nhon proper within the framework of his general offensive plan, in order to deflate the popular myth concerning its invulnerability. He committed a gager assault force of less than battalion size - some 200 men - the battle. This battle could only be regarded as a token contribution to his highly publicized countrywide general offensive.

A. THE QUI NHON BATTLE

The enemy wanted very much to capitalize on the element of surprise in the conduct of his assault. The assault, however had been anticipated by the friendly forces who had gotten prepared for a counterattack. Factors unknown to friendly forces, however, were exact knowledge of when and how the enemy would unleash their ground assault. Lt. Phan Minh Tho, chief of Binh Dinh Province, sent out loudspeaker trucks to roam throughout the city on the afternoon of Tet's Eve, to inform the people that firecrackers were banned. This was a counter-
VC ATTACK IN QUI-NHON

LEGEND:

- Enemy advance
- Huyen-Tran Hamlet.
- Railways station.
- Radio station.
- Government house.
order which contradicted central governmental decision to allow the people all over the country to enjoy this tradition of the celebration - exploding firecrackers to greet the big holiday. Most people had already bought firecrackers for the celebration. Many people complied with the surprise order; others did not and set off firecrackers stealthily.

The order was motivated by intelligence reports about an imminent enemy attack on the city. The reports were based on statements by a leading local Viet Cong cadreman and on the strange-sounding pronouncements of two captured audio tapes. The Viet Cong agent was identified as Nguyen Phung Khuon alias Bien Cuong, provincial commissar in charge of the Qui Nhon underground administration. He and ten of his close aides were captured in town.

The province chief also imposed an unusually long curfew on the city adjoining areas and placed all the local security forces - police and soldiers - on a full alert footing.

Col Tho reported the above information to his superior officers, II Corps Commander Gen. Vinh Loc and 22nd Infantry Division Commander Gen. Nguyen Van Hieu. Lt Col Le Van Than, the ARVN Joint General Staff Operation Center Director, was also notified of the content of the strange audio tapes when Col Tho played them for him over the radio telephone.

Right after initial intelligence reports reached the Army Security Service concerning enemy agents in the suburban Bach Dang hamlet. The Binh Dinh Sector Command conducted a successful raid on the enemy hideout. Second Lt Le Xuan Vinh led ten men, all disguised as civilians, in the raid. They quickly and quietly cordoned the suspected location. Then they jumped on the enemy from the roof of a house and found three men and one woman working on a tape recorder. Caught by surprise the four tried to resist and flee. They were too late. Their two pistols were taken by the government agents along with the tape recorder and two tapes. They never had a chance to fire their guns. A quick interrogation of the captives caused the government agents to storm a nearby house where five male and two female Viet Cong were captured and tied up before they could fire any shots. Together, eleven enemy agents were arrested in the raid.

Initial interrogation of a few of the captives revealed that the enemy would probably take advantage of the Tet holiday to attack Qui Nhon and other towns and cities across the land. Four of the eleven arrested refused to disclose anything substantial about the
The Radio Station in Qui Nhon city, which enemy troops occupied for over 12 hours.

An armed propaganda team in action in the street of Qui Nhon
LTC Phan Minh Tho, Binh Dinh Governor congratulating the deserving combatants.

National Salvation Youths

Civil servants were given weapons to become civil guards.
plot. The 22nd Army Security Zone chief, Capt. Nguyen Van Quyen, spent a whole day conducting the interrogation, which failed to turn up the detail of the enemy's scheme of assault. By midnight the captain and all of his men were too tired to continue the interrogation further. Time was running out for the local commanders.

It was all quiet in town as if nothing were to happen. The people religiously observed both the big holiday and the curfew.

Gunfire suddenly commenced around 0410 h. on Tet Day, or Jan 30. It started right in the middle of the city just outside the Army Security Service building there the eleven enemy who had been captured several hours earlier were being detained. Apparently the enemy sought to liberate these men and women before launching the city-wide offensive.

After overpowering the few guards at the Army Security Service compound, the enemy started the full scale assault on the city. They commenced with an attack on Qui Nhon radio station and the adjoining areas. Only a few dozen enemy sappers were committed to the action. Apparently, they still adhered to their original offensive plan to take over the radio station and use it to broadcast their ready-made tapes in order to fool the local citizens into joining a popular uprising against the local government and army garrison. The fact that the sappers tried their best to hold out at the radio station proved this point. They fought in ferocious manner only to be wiped out. At no stage of their occupation of the radio station were they able to broadcast any official statements or appeals for a popular uprising.

The entire enemy force committed to the Qui Nhon offensive was estimated at two understrength battalions. The command of these battalions may have been reluctant to launch the assault. Qui Nhon was a major Vietnamese and allied base with major troop concentrations and military installations. Apparently the enemy sought to seize and control it for a few days for propaganda purposes or to use as a contribution of sorts to the Viet Cong High Command's general offensive throughout the Republic. Within this context the Qui Nhon offensive may be judged as a calculated act of suicide for the two unlucky battalions committed. One of these two battalions, identified as E2B, was only 100 or fewer men. The same was true of the sapper battalion which bore the brunt of the assault and took most of the casualties.
These two battalions had infiltrated through the northwestern side of the city from the Thi Nai lake areas. During the infiltration they split two columns. One column led by the sapper reconnaissance battalion broke into the middle of the city. Here an armed underground suicide unit disguised as soldiers of the 22nd Infantry Division had safely infiltrated several days previously. The main objective of all these enemy forces was to attack and occupy the radio station and then to call for a popular uprising. A secondary enemy force, spearheaded by the sapper company D30, tried to land just behind the provincial administrative headquarters and sector command compound in stolen civilian junks and sampans. Most of their landing craft were sunk by American patrol boats.

The two columns of the enemy force spearheaded by the 22B battalion, moved from the Thi Nai lake, overran the suburban hamlet and occupied the Qui Nhon railroad station. From the railroad station enemy troops moved in small groups into adjoining populated areas. They urged the people to rise up against the government. Their ambitious plan failed because the people refused to join any propaganda rallies or demonstrations organized by the enemy. Angered, the enemy resorted to terrorization of the people. He murdered and wounded a number of innocent civilians and he destroyed a number of the public installations in the area. A detailed account of the action follows.

The enemy surprise attack on the Army Security Service compound was first detected by Sergeant Thu who fired the first bursts of submachinegun fire at the advancing enemy but was killed by the numerically superior force. Sgt Thu's death allowed the enemy ready access to the compound where Capt Quyen, dog-tired after a hectic day which included the raid, capture and interrogation of the eleven enemy agents, was caught napping. He was captured and led away and has not been heard of since. Four of the 12 men who were with Capt Quyen died resisting the enemy. Eight were wounded. A number of them managed to escape unhurt.

Normally the compound was guarded by a detail of combat soldiers contributed by various armed services on a daily basis. For reasons unknown, that guard detail was not formed at the commandant's request that day. Some people blamed Lt Col Tuy deputy sector commander, for the failure. Others said that the failure was due to the fact that a good number of garrison soldiers had been excused from duty to celebrate Tet at home. Official sources never confirmed or
denied these and other allegations.

While enemy troops stormed the Army Security and adjacent compounds a group of guerrillas, disguised as soldiers of the 22nd Infantry Division made their way into the city's military command compound which was located in the same general area. They were detected by the guards. The guards opened fire supported by two armored vehicles positioned on Vo Tanh street. The armored vehicles were positioned to increase the security of the radio station. After having cut down several waves of the enemy assault force they were later crippled by enemy B40 rockets. The enemy finally attacked the station and the nearby information service building and subsidiary installations. His swift assault on these and other points in the city was made possible partly by the faulty appraisal of enemy capabilities. Our troops were given reinforcements but were not vigilant enough. The radio station was occupied by the enemy. Among the occupants was Bien Cuong, who had been one of the agents captured the day before and detained at the security headquarters. He wanted to broadcast propaganda but failed because the lost audio tapes which had to be used never recaptured by the guerrillas. The radio station battle was the most serious defeat for the friendly force in Qui Nhon during the offensive. Nine guards were killed and thirty wounded and missing. The weapons and a PRC 10 radio were lost. The enemy redistributed captured weapons to some pro-Communist civilians in order to plan a popular uprising which never materialized. In the afternoo

The Binh Dinh sector command regrouped all the existing and available organic manpower and fire power to cope with the insingly critical situation. The only thing available was one Regional force assault company supported by four APC's, the latter had just been sent in by the 22nd Tactical Zone Command.

The zone commander, Gen. Nguyen Van Hieu, later engaged in the 405th Reconnaissance Company. This unit was engaged by the enemy at Long Van Hamlet and never reached the town. A company of the 12th Engineer Battalion and a platoon of the B.11 Special Force Command were also dispatched to aid the city. They reached the station at 0800h but could not drive the enemy out of their positions inside the radio station.

The Korean "Tiger" Division, headquartered somewhere from the city, was then requested to assist. Two Korean companies

were rushed to the city. Around 1030h, the 1/4 Battalion of the 1/25th Division was sent to relieve the pressure from the enemy who were attacking the nearby railroad line.

civilians who did not want to try to surrender to the enemy. Around midday the enemy penetrated the city and started a search for the station. The Korean division was engaged in other six hour and a half battle with the enemy in Qui Nhon. The Korean division was requested to keep the station. The Korean division was engaged in other six hour and a half battle with the enemy in Qui Nhon. The Korean division was requested to keep the station.
were rushed to the radio station area around 1600h. Two hours later 1/4 Battalion of the 22nd Infantry Division arrived to relieve enemy pressure from the Huyen Tran Hamlet as two Special Forces companies from the B.11 Command were helilifted into town to recapture the railroad station.

The operation was slowed down by the fact that too many civilians were trapped inside the enemy-held areas. Friendly forces did not want their counterattacks to become too destructive for these innocent people. Loudspeaker trucks were sent out to tell the people to try to get out of the operational areas and also to tell the enemy to surrender.

Night fell on the city but friendly troops still were not even approval to start shooting. All the enemy held areas were cor­rinated while the loudspeaker trucks continued continuous broadcasting. Around midnight loudspeaker planes and choppers started to fly over enemy positions calling on enemy troops to surrender. This psywar operation lasted all night till the morning of the second day of Tet or 31.

The enemy only fired occasionally. The round-the-clock curfew was still in force. The curious crowds thronged to Vo Tanh Street for a glimpse of the imminent confrontation at the radio station.

About 0800h.reports reached the city that a Communist­ popular demonstration was moving into the city from Tuy Phuoc District, some 12kms away. Two fire engines and a loudspeaker truck were sent out to disperse the marchers. Before these vehicles con­ the demonstration it had been broken up by soldiers of the 5th Recon Company, who had been stopped by an enemy blocking the day before.

Shortly after mid-morning, the Koreans opened fire on the multi­storied radio station. Smoke billowed skyward from this building and apparently blinded the stubborn defenders. The Korean troops began to assault the building and the adjoining information office around 1030 hours. a 30 man police detail led by Maj Hai was sent to help the Koreans separate the trapped civilians from the captured survivors. After assaulting the building the Koreans took ano­ six hours to finish the last of the enemy. The enemy held out and engaged in room-to-room fighting which did not end until about 1600h. The Korean assault ended the enemy's 12-hour control of the radio don. The entire enemy force was knocked out of action suffering...
24 killed, 12 wounded and captured and the lost of 25 weapons including two crew served weapons. Bien Cuong and an enemy battalion commander were among the enemy killed. The radio station was almost completely destroyed and was not heard until an emergency transmitter, loaned by JUSPAO and manned by Binh Dinh sector technical personnel, allowed it to go on the air that night.

The liberation of the suburban Huyen Tran Hamlet was also completed the same day. The hamlet is located at the foot of Ba Hoa mountain just on the western outskirts on the city. Let's now examine the events leading up to its liberation. The enemy seized Huyen Tran Hamlet on Jan 30. Right after overrunning it, it sent small groups of armed recon troops farther out toward the heart of the city. These troops went down Gia Long Street (the city's main street) and toward the harbor. Many of these groups were either repulsed or wiped out. Others tried to fade back into other populated areas. A few of the enemy tried unsuccessfully to occupy a multi storied building overlooking the Nguyen Hue park. Others succeeded in setting fire to the Caltex filling station on Dong Da street. They murdered its owner, Nguyen Phuoc Tien. In the Ly Thuong Kiet Hamlet they killed three civilians. In Nguyen Cao Hamlet they gunned down five others, including the 60-year-old Khon Mieu. Four enemy, who entered the city's main bus station, were captured trying to hide in a nearby drainage duct. Local citizens handed government troops to their hiding place. The enemy was captured and surrendered three weapons.

In the almost unopposed liberation of Huyen Tran Hamlet, The 1/41 Battalion moved up Gia Long and Dong Da streets. In a battle encounter a few blocks short of the hamlet four enemy were killed and a few grenades captured. The estimated enemy platoon, which controlled the hamlet, had withdrawn to the railroad station where they were pinned down by the concentrated fire power of the CIDG Force, positioned atop Mrs Nguyen Thi De's building. The enemy pulled back into the station's workshop and three abandoned boxcars where they fought back. A few enemy fled across the Ba Hoa mountain where they were chased uphill and fired at in the presence of crowds of curious civilians, who trailed the pursuing government troops. The enemy force holed up in the station's workshop and boxcars were wiped out by 1630 hours. 14 were killed, 10 wounded captured and five weapons were seized. Friendly troops lost four killed and seven wounded. The workshop was a total loss. Its equipment which included a crane, one lathe and four diesel engines, was seriously damaged. If not all of its portable tools had been looted.
The 1/41 Battalion started a systematic sweep of the Huyen Tran Hamlet for possible enemy survivors before sunset. The sweep continued till 1230 h the following day. At this time the battalion left the area to return to the 22nd Infantry Division headquarters.

The Binh Dinh province chief called a mass rally soon after the recapture of the radio station. Some 2,000 citizens attended the rally to condemn the enemy truce violation and act of betrayal. The objectives of the rally were to calm down popular emotions over the enemy actions and to restore public order.

Some of the surviving enemy, however, were still hiding inside the city that night and taking potshots at the Ham Nghi street police station. One of them was cornered inside the post office and was captured several hours later.

In the following days the police sweep and screening of civilians resulted in the capture of several enemy and weapons. The following are the results of the day-to-day searches and sweeps:

- On the third day of Tet, Korean troops searched the radio station and killed four enemy, seized three weapons and captured an enemy Lieutenant; 1/41 Battalion captured two enemy and one grenade in Huyen Tran Hamlet; troops and police killed four enemy and seized five AK's and rifles, and one pistol, which the enemy had thrown into the well of Lt Col Tuy's house. Earlier in the day the enemy had opened sniper fire from this house wounding one American Lieutenant and two CIDG men.

- On the fourth day of Tet the sector troops captured four enemy, the 405th Recon Company killed one and seized one weapon, the Special Forces captured four enemy and seized three weapons, and sector garrison platoon found 18 enemy weapons hidden in town.

- On the fifth day of Tet, four enemy were captured and one enemy pistol was seized, including one enemy with the pistol captured by local citizens. One American MP was wounded by enemy fire that day.

The sweep continued throughout the following days and resulted in the capture of a few enemy hiding in populated areas. By the fifth day of Tet, or Feb 3, the city was slowly returning to normal. Shops were opened and the city market was in business. The city's power and water supply system continued to work normally throughout.
the fighting except for these combat areas where power lines and water mains were torn down or disrupted by the fighting.

The total results of the enemy's Tet offensive in Qui Nhon city were as follows:

Enemy: 110 killed, including provincial commissar Bien Cuong and a battalion commander; 57 captured including Lieutenant Nguyen, political commissar of the enemy sapper battalion, and 129 weapons seized, including nine crew served weapons. Those captured also included a number of suspects and pro-Communist agents.

Friendly: 17 killed, including three American officers and four enlisted men; 64 wounded and 38 weapons lost, including two crew served weapons.

Public property damage included the Information Office, the radio station, the Army Security Service compound, two police jeeps, two armored vehicles, two military trucks, and the virtual destruction of the railroad station's workshop.

Civilian property damage included moderate damage to 110 houses in Huyen Tran Hamlet, nine in Nguyen Cong Tru Hamlet and 46 in Bach Dang Hamlet. Civilian casualties throughout the Binh Dinh province were 129 killed and 116 wounded. About half of these civilian casualties were from Qui Nhon city.

The offensive caused a total of 16,016 refugees to be displaced from their homes and villages into safer government-controlled areas.

B. ENEMY OFFENSIVE ON DISTRICT TOWNS

Besides Qui Nhon city a number of district towns such as An Nhon and Tuy Phuoc were assaulted by the enemy.

An estimated enemy company attempted to assault An Nhon on the morning of Feb 2 or the fourth day of Tet. They suffered sixty killed and lost eleven weapons, including one anti-aircraft machinegun. This result was obtained by the district's newly reinforced militia garrison, supported by airstrikes. Most of the enemy casualties were credited to airstrikes.

In Loc Ha Hamlet, just outside Tuy Phuoc district town, a Regional Force unit engaged the enemy and killed 45 of them and seized eight assorted weapons.
Phan Thiet

Phan Thiet city, located on the shore of the sea and about 170kms ENE of Saigon, is divided into two sections by the Muong Man or Ca Ty river. The residential and business section is on the right or southern bank. The administrative section is on the left or northeastern bank. The city sits astride the river's estuary. Northern portion of the river can be forded at ebb tide. The two sections of the city are linked to each other by a steel bridge. The sections have a combined population of about 50,000 inhabitants living in seven hamlets - four on the southern left bank of the Muong Man river and three on the northern right bank. The right bank hamlets are Duc Nghia, Duc Thang, Duc Long and Lac Dao. The three left bank hamlets are Phu Trinh, Binh Hung and Vinh Phu.

Three kms west of the city is the airfield where a US Air Force unit was stationed. The airfield also included helipads. On the northwestern side of the city is a vast wild expanse of white sand easy for the enemy to infiltrate. The southern side borders on the sea and is a busy fishing and fish sauce manufacturing area.

The city people are predominantly hard workers who make a living out of fishing, fish sauce manufacturing and small businesses. Generally they are not interested in politics or politically-oriented. This explains why enemy agents had always been unable to secure any firm political foothold in the city proper. Against this background one can conclude that the enemy's 1968 Tet offensive was launched from outside bases many miles away.

A. THE PHAN THIET OFFENSIVE.

In a period of slightly over one month the city was subjected to four distinct ground assaults during the 1968 Tet offensive. The first assault lasted the first seven days of Tet or from Jan 30 through Feb 5. The second one lasted from Feb 17 through Feb 20; the third from Feb 25 through Feb 26 and the fourth one only one day, Mar 2.

The first assault started around 0325 h. on Jan 31. The enemy simultaneously attacked the airfield, key area 44 between Dinh...
THE ATTACK ON TRINH TUONG

LEGEND

: POPULOUS AREA OCCUPIED BY
: ALLIED TROOP ADVANCE
: ENEMY TROOP MOVEMENT
: VC HEAVY WEAPONS

PHAN-THIET CITY

LEGEND:

.. Damaged areas

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Cong Tuong

Ngoc Quan

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Cong Trang and Cao-Thang camps and the Trinh Tuong Camp on Luong Ngoc Quyen Road, which was about one kilometer from the provincial administrative headquarters.

The enemy unit committed to the assault was the 482nd VC Battalion. This was a main-force VC unit with a strength of about 300 men which had been operating in Binh Thuan for a long time.

The enemy force moved in two columns. One column included Companies C1 and C2 supported by a heavy weapon had the mission of assaulting the Trinh Tuong Camp. The other column which included Company C3 was to attack the Phu Khanh Hamlet.

The Trinh Tuong Camp was defended by a platoon of the Artillery Battalion 23B and elements of the 954th Regional Force Company. There were a total of about 50 men. The camp was the home base of the 44th Infantry Regiment whose main force was operating in the field. Following a long pre-Tet operation in the province most of the 954th RF Company troops were allowed a Tet home leave.

Though outnumbered and outgunned the defenders managed to turn back all of the enemy's assault waves. At daylight, nearly 20 enemy bodies were found in the area. The enemy's heavy weapons had been used to soften up the camp prior to the actual ground assault. Throughout the night of Jan 30 they also directed diversionary mortar and cannon fire at the Dinh Cong Trang Camp.

Enemy troops still surrounded the Trinh Tuong Camp. On the morning of the second day of Tet or Jan 31, Maj Tran Van Cha, deputy province chief, led two understrength RF companies, the 208th, and 954th, to relieve enemy pressures from the beleaguered camp. Many of the 150 man force had hurriedly returned from their Tet home leave. These units moved up Nguyen Hoang Road maneuvering behind the camp and engaged the enemy who was equipped with new AK's and 840 rocket launchers. The relief column tried unsuccessfully to move further but had to fight a delaying battle waiting for reinforcements.

Lt Col Nguyen Khac Tuan, province chief, led another combat unit up Luong Ngoc Quyen Road and directly hit enemy lines facing the camp. This unit was later commanded by Lt Lu Tay Tuu, Binh Thuan subsector intelligence officer. The unit had only 48 men, all seasoned soldiers.
The group moved up in two military trucks. As it reached the Interrogation Center it received a round of B40 rocket fire which missed the target. The attackers, equipped with captured enemy AK automatic rifles, left the trucks and maneuvered against the right flank of the enemy line firing their weapons. The characteristic sound of the group's AK's confused the enemy so badly that he did not return fire. He allowed the group to move deep into his position and then between his position and the beleaguered camp. Lt Thu radioed Maj Cha requesting an assault against the enemy's heavy weapon unit. The major conducted a ferocious and accurate assault supported by machineguns mounted on commando cars. The attack destroyed virtually the entire enemy heavy weapon unit. This action cost the enemy one 82mm mortar, one machinegun, two light machineguns, one B40 rocket launcher and nine rifles. In addition the deputy commander of the 482th VC Battalion was killed and two company leaders, two platoon leaders and eight guerrillas were captured.

The enemy troops losing their top leaders, were demoralized and pulled back in the face of the fast advancing relief column. Thus the siege around the Trinh Tuong Camp was broken around 1000.

The enemy spread into the adjoining Cho Go area after failing to take the camp. Here he was bombèd by jet fighters in the afternoon. Government troops fought hard but still failed to dislodge the enemy from this populated area. As night fell the 208th RF Company was left behind to strengthen the camp's garrison and to block enemy access to other neighboring areas. Meanwhile civilian refugees streamed across the city's only bridge to reach the quiet southwestern side of the city.

The enemy company C2 faded into the populated Cho Go area following their defeat at the Trinh Tuong Camp. The other enemy elements pulled back to the sandy northwestern side of the city.

Their route of withdrawal had been blocked by two platoons, one from the 506th US Task Force and the other 101st US Airborne Division. They were helilifted into the area around 1600. These American units engaged the enemy 7kms northwest of downtown Phan Thiet and killed another 30 men of retreating Company C1.

On the second night of Tet, Jan 31 calm returned to the whole city. Airdropped flares still served as a grim reminder to the people of the city that the war was still very much on.
TriBh hamlet afire.  

Phu Trinh hamlet afire.  

Market at Phu Trinh hamlet following 2nd wave of Communist attacks.
were unable to advance. The 208th RFS company with a truck platoon and many headquarters was attached to the platoon. Meanwhile, the ARVN moved three company columns to take advantage of the enemy's rest at Hamlet.

The camp was held by Company C, 400 men of Company, C4, ARVN. The remnants of Company A and Company B with a reinforcement of about 250 men returned to the initial assault. The battalion was not at the battalion level, the battalion commander having assumed the predomination of the battalion with about 250 men of the reconnaissance unit.

assaulted the side of the adjoining hill from the attacking forces in the area, the 1st Platoon, Company F. Other Platoons were filling station by station by the shell jets.
Throughout the third day of Tet, Feb 1st, friendly troops were unable to dislodge the remnants of the enemy from the populated areas around the Trinh Tuong Camp. The morale of the understrength 208th RF Company was poor. The same was true of the 954th RF Company which had only one combat platoon. Only a machinegun-mounted truck platoon blocked the road and alleys leading to the sector command headquarters. The hard hit - one killed and seven wounded - recon platoon was overworked and tried and unable to fight much longer. Meanwhile civilian refugees streamed across the bridge by the thousands to the southwestern side of the city. Some enemy elements took advantage of the low tide to cross the river and infiltrate Lac Dao Hamlet.

The enemy 482nd Battalion, decimated in the Trinh Tuong camp assault and during its retreating route, still had a reserve company, C4, uncommitted to any fighting at all. This company and remnants of company C3 withdrew to the Dai Nam area to regroup and get replacements, equipment and supplies. Reinforced by the 481st Sapper Company, the 485th Artillery Company, the 430th Regional Guerrilla Company and a number of support elements, the enemy 482nd Battalion returned to the city for another massive assault.

The battalion objectives were the same as those in the initial assault plus the province sector command complex.

Intelligence reports later revealed that another enemy battalion was moving toward the city. This was the 480th Viet Cong Battalion from the Le Hong Phong Jungle War Zone. The 480th battalion first appeared in Binh Thuan province in early 1967. It was staffed predominantly by North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops and numbered about 250 men plus the 450th Local Guerrilla Company as a reconnaiss ance unit.

This battalion reached the city around 0300h. Feb 2, and assaulted the police station, which had some 100 police officers, and an adjoining officers’ club defended by one militia platoon. While attacking these two points the battalion shelled the Cho Go residential area, the sector command headquarters and the Dinh Cong Trang camp. Only four soldiers were killed and six wounded at this camp. All other targets did not suffer any casualties or damage. Two diesel stations at Luong Muoi and the railroad station were set aflame by the shelling.
The Binh Thuan High School following the May offensive
On the way to Trinh Tuong Camp
Facing an increasingly critical situation the sector command decided to call in reinforcements from the 23rd Tactical Zone Command. Zone Commander, Col Truong Quang An, dispatched the 3rd Battalion, 4th APC Squadron and 44th Regiment from Vinh Hao in Ninh Thuan province to rescue the embattled city. The 44th Regt was commanded by Maj Vo Kham. It was intercepted by the enemy in Phu Long about 10kms short of Phan Thiet around 1630 hours Feb 2, It had been moving for eleven hours from its Ninh Thuan home base. It suffered one M.113 armored personnel carrier (APC) destroyed and two soldiers killed but succeeded in fighting its way into the city where it arrived half an hour later. Two US advisors to the 3rd Battalion were also wounded in the Phu Long clash. The regiment remained at a filling station and refused to enter the Phan Thiet battle. Its commanding officer claimed that the night did not favor its accomplishment of the mission.

Meanwhile in Phan Thiet city proper the numerically superior enemy force still failed in their attack against the police station and the officers’ club even with the support of its 57mm recoilless rifle squad which was positioned in the Buu Quang pagoda few hundred meters away. Six members of the squad were killed while police suffered fifteen killed in the fight.

Throughout the fourth day of Tet, Feb 2, tension continued to rise throughout the city. The enemy attacked and took the Giac Ho pagoda, the Forestry Service building and dug in inside the park in front of the railroad station in order to attack the Officers’ Club. Tr Xom Con fishing people evacuated the area with many of them going off-shore in their fishing boats.

Airdropped flares lit the whole city throughout the night. Around 1400h, the enemy 482nd Battalion appeared and assaulted the city at four places; the Trinh Tuong Camp, the business section of the city market place, the Dinh Cong Trang Camp and the Y gate.

The enemy did not succeed in their attack against the Trinh Tuong camp in the face of the stubborn resistance of the outnumbered, outgunned but entrenched defenders.

Around 1600h, a reinforced enemy platoon crossed the Muong Man river and attacked the traffic police station on Khai Dien Road and the Duc Nghia village administrative office. The police station fell swiftly into enemy hands as its few guards fled. One guard was wounded and a few of the others simply hid upstairs.

enemy paralyzed the officers and the nearby police. The soldiers were delivered to the Gothic Co slum area from this meeting and Nguyen Van Co slipped out. While fighting was going on by the thousands of boats to go.
enemy passed so briefly that he failed to uncover the weapon rack and the officers hiding inside the structure. He continued to move toward the nearby Anh Dao Hotel where he met some resistance from friendly soldiers who were positioned in the multistoried MACV office in the Nga Bay area. A CIDG company was called in to relieve enemy pressure from this business section which includes Gia Long, Ly Thuong Kiet and Nguyen Du Streets. By 1115 hours the enemy withdrew to the Con Co slum area which was strafed by fighter planes around 1600h. A fire broke out. The area was not secured until Feb 4 or two days later. While fighting raged in the Nga Bay and Con Co areas civilians moved by the thousands to other beachside areas, many of them rented fishing boats to go to Hon Lao islet.

The third enemy column moved to assault the city's sector complex which was the headquarters of the 44th Special Zone. This column was estimated at company strength and included 57 and 75mm recoilless rifles. These weapons opened fire from the area between the Dinh Cong Trang and Cao Thanh camps. These two camps were defended by elements of the 441st RF Company who were mostly sick, physically unfit combat soldiers plus one PF militia platoon and one ordnance platoon. The enemy fired their B40 rockets. However many of the enemy were cut down right at the beginning of the battle by machinegun crew. Flares favored the outnumbered defenders and the accuracy of their gun fire. By daybreak the C.O., Capt Nguyen Huu Chi, led a relief squad to the area and found several enemy bodies and two recoilless rifles. Enemy snipers shot him down and hit Sgt Le Van Dang who walked right behind him. The captain died shortly after the camp defenders recovered his body and carried it into the camp. It was 0615h. Feb 3.

The fourth enemy column, estimated at about one platoon, first appeared around 1100h Feb 2. It had apparently moved from the Long Hai pagoda area in Duc Long hamlet. It was thrown back by aocking force.

This critical situation continued throughout the night of Feb 2 before the relief force from the 23rd Tactical Zone from NinhBạn entered the picture on the following morning. The 4th APC Squadron rumbled up Highway 1 and reached the Trinh Tuong Camp rapidly, scaring the enemy away. The 3rd Infantry Battalion soldiers, supported by the APC's, followed up with a systematic sweep of the populated areas. The APC Squadron moved down Luong Quyen and Hai Thuong continuing the advance along the road. They reached the stadium opposite the camp around 0900 hours.
almost unopposed. The enemy was still holding out in the stadium. The armored vehicles did not enter the stadium through the main gate but smashed its wall at two places to enter from both flanks instead. This maneuver caught the enemy by surprise and unprepared for the counterattack. On the one flank the APC’s smashing of the wall killed 17 enemy who were positioned right behind it. The troop rushed to the back of the stadium where the enemy had abandoned two recoilless rifles, one 57 and one 75mm. These two guns had been positioned too close to the Dinh Cong Trang Camp by the enemy and therefore were stopped by camp defenders who destroyed their crews with machinegun fire. Only a few hours earlier attempts to capture these weapons had cost the life of Capt. Chi and had wounded a Sergeant. The enemy never ventured to retake them. The armor troop commander, Lt Lam, jumped out of his armored carrier to retrieve the two recoilless rifles. Right at the split second he was stepping back into his waiting APC a burst of AK automatic rifle fire was heard and the youthful lieutenant was hit. Fortunately enough he was just hit in one of his hands.

For two hours, fighting raged until 1100 h. in and around the stadium. The APC’s liberated the Dinh Cong Trang Camp and then moved out to be refueled and resupplied at the sector command. Fifty enemy bodies were counted in the area.

The battle around the camp was still far from finished. Around 1400h, the APC’s returned to the area and maneuvered behind the enemy positions to support a ground sweep by foot soldiers. Another armor officer was wounded during this encounter. Enemy pressure noticeably subsided around the camp as night fell. The enemy 480th Battalion left only a small element behind to fight a delaying action to enable its main force to get away. Four kms NE of the city this enemy element was intercepted by a blocking force at Ben Noi bridge. The engagement resulted in 17 enemy killed and 20 captured. Also captured were four AK-47 and one mortar.

On the sixth day of Tet, Feb 4, friendly forces continued their sweep operations in the city and its suburbs. Included among these forces was 3/506 US Battalion. The city returned to normal the following day. It was quiet until Feb 8 when enemy gunners shot and set fire to the fuel depot of the 131st Company destroying some 350,000 litres of gas and 270,000 litres of diesel oil.

The following is a balance sheet of the 15-day Phan Thanh battle:

- 404 -
VC. ATTACKS IN PHAN-THIET
(SECOND WAVE)

Legend:
- Concrete bunker
- Enemy troop movement
- Rail road

Quang-Trung Camp
Primary School
Park
Tennis Court
Memorial
Chinh-Tam School
Prison

8. Public Work Service
9. Sector Hqs
10. Government House
11. Cathedral
12. Power Station
13. RD Storage area
14. National Police
15. Officer's Club
16. Station
17. Post Office
18. Treasury
19. Hai-Thuong Lan-Ong Street
20. De-Tham Camp
21. National Route 1
   (toward Ninh-Thuan)

- 405 -
VC weapons confiscated in Phan Thiet
Only small battle was recorded in the downtown section of Phan Thiet. It took place at the Anh Dao Hotel which five VC agents had occupied.