PRESS BRIEFING
1968 TET OFFENSIVE IN II CTZ
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Fundamental to any discussion of enemy offensive actions in the II Corps Zone is an understanding of the vast size, varied terrain, and location of population densities. Each of these three factors has played an important role in where the enemy has positioned his forces and where he has chosen to launch his offensive campaigns.

Composed of twelve of the larger provinces in South Vietnam, the II Corps Zone covers approximately 48% of South Vietnam and is the largest tactical area of responsibility in the country. The eastern boundary extends 320 miles along the South China Sea. At its widest point the zone stretches 136 miles from the fertile coastal plains through the rugged Annamite Mountains to the plateau and western highlands along the Cambodian and Laotian border. The 240 mile western boundary is composed of a 65 mile common border with Laos and a 175 mile common border with Cambodia.

The varied topography of this large area has greatly influenced population densities, military deployment, and the facilities available to support the population and military operations. Though the zone covers over 30,417 square miles it contains only 18% of the country's population: approximately 3,000,000. Most of the population is concentrated on the rich agricultural coastal plains around the cities of Qui Nhon, Tuy Hoa, Minh Hoa, Nha Trang, Danang, Phan Rang, and Phan Thiet. The only major population center in the Annamites is the autonomous city of Dalat. West of the sparsely populated mountains, the only major urban areas are Ban Me Thuot in Darlac Province, Pleiku City in Pleiku Province, and Kontum City in Kontum Province.

The Annamite Mountains form a natural barrier to ground movement between the coast and the highland plateau. The Annamites are crossed by five major roads. In the north, route 19 connects Qui Nhon with Pleiku. Highways 7 and 21 connect the coastal areas around Tuy Hoa and Minh Hoa with Highway 14 and Ban Me Thuot respectively. Dalat is connected to the Phan Rang area by Route 11 and to Saigon by Route 20. There are but two north/south highways: these are Highway 20, the coastal highway and Highway 14.

Based on the location of the population centers, the ground lines of communications, and the infiltration routes, the enemy forces in the II Corps Tactical Zone have deployed in three distinct areas of military operations. Since the fall of 1965 enemy forces have concentrated their forces in the western highlands, the northern coastal provinces, and the southern provinces.

In order to outline the magnitude and impact of the enemy's Tet offensive operations within the II Corps Tactical Zone his actions must be viewed within the military and psychological situation that prevailed prior to Tet. The enemy made a concerted effort in the last quarter of 1967 to halt or at least limit allied initiative and offensive successes which were making increased and dramatic inroads against the VC/NVA. Allied forces successfully met the test in September-October at Tuy Hoa, at Dak To in November and in Binh Dinh and Binh Thuan Provinces during December and early January. Each phase of the enemy winter-spring offensive campaign failed despite significant commitment of men and materiel. It should be noted that, due primarily to the need for additional forces in other corps areas, significant changes occurred in the composition of US and ARVN forces prior to and during Tet. At the height of the Dak To battle in November there were a total of 76 maneuver battalion in the II Corps Zone. (28 - US, 32 - ARVN, 16 ROK). At Tet there was a total of 67. (21 - US, 28 - ARVN, 18 - ROK). From the end of November 1967 to the end of January 1968 two ARVN Airborne Battalions and two Marine Battalions left the corps area. US forces deployed out of II Corps during this time were the Division HQ and 1st Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division with four battalions and the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division.
with four battalions. Only one battalion, the 3d Battalion, 506th Airborne Infantry, 101st Airborne Division came into the corps zone during this period. From Dak To to Tet allied forces in II Corps steadily diminished in size as allied successes and GVN control steadily increased. The failure of the enemy to regain the initiative made his need for a spectacular success more and more of an absolute necessity. Prior to the G2 briefer examining the enemy offensive for you in detail, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss the disposition of US, ARVN and ROK forces prior to Tet and the significant shifts made to counter the enemy threat during Tet.

Note: All dispositions and moves keyed to map and pointed out by G2 briefer.

ARVN forces in the corps zone are organized into two divisional areas and a Special Tactical Zone. The 22d ARVN Division with its headquarters at Ba Gia, northwest of Qui Nhon was disposed at Tet in Binh Dinh, Phu Bon and Phu Yen Provinces as follows: the 40th Regiment of 4 infantry battalions, the 41st Regiment of 4 infantry battalions and the Marine Task Force with 2 battalions in Binh Dinh Province; 3 infantry battalions of the 47th Regiment were in Phu Yen Province at Tuy Hoa and one infantry battalion was at Cheo Reo in Phu Bon Province. Major moves made during the Tet period in the 22d Division area was the move of the 1st Battalion, 41st Regiment to Qui Nhon on 30 January and the 2 battalions of the Marine Task Force to Saigon on 2 February.

The 24th Special Tactical Zone with its headquarters in Kontum City was deployed at Tet in Kontum and Pleiku Provinces with the 3 battalions of the 42d ARVN Regiment at Dak To, Tan Canh and Edap Enang; the 6th ARVN Airborne Battalion at Dak To and 2 Ranger Battalions of the Ranger Task Force at Pleiku; also at Pleiku was the 3d ARVN Armored Cavalry Squadron. Major moves made by forces of the 24th STZ were: the 6th ARVN Airborne Battalion from Dak To to Saigon on 30 January; the 1st Battalion, 42d ARVN Infantry from Edap Enang to Pleiku on 4 February and the 11th Ranger Battalion to Dalat on 9 February.

The 23d ARVN Division was disposed at Tet in the remainder of the seven provinces of II Corps. At Ban Me Thuot were 3 battalions of the 45th ARVN Infantry Regiment and the 8th ARVN Armored Cavalry Squadron; the 1st Battalion and the 2d Battalion, 44th ARVN Infantry Regiment; the remaining 3 battalions of the 44th Regiment were at Phan Rang, Tuy Phong and Phan Thiet. Major moves made in the 23d Division was the 3d Battalion, 44th Regiment from Tuy Phong to Phan Thiet on 2 February; the 23d Ranger Battalion from Bao Loc to Ban Me Thuot on 31 January and then to Dalat on 5 February.

ROK forces of 2 divisions, with 9 infantry battalions each, were disposed at Tet within the eastern coastal provinces of southern Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khan Hoa and northern Ninh Thuan. The Capital ROK Infantry Division had the 1st Regiment of 3 infantry battalions and the Cav Regiment of 3 infantry battalions deployed from Phu Cat to Qui Nhon; the 26th Infantry Regiment of 3 battalions from south of Qui Nhon to north of Tuy Hoa. The 9th ROK Infantry Division had its 3 regiments deployed as follows: the 28th Regiment of 3 battalions vicinity Tuy Hoa; the 29th Regiment of 3 battalions vicinity Ninh Hoa and the 30th Regiment of 3 battalions from north of Nha Trang, south, to north of Phan Rang. Moves of ROK forces were, in the main, local moves from the country side into the threatened cities.

US forces were deployed in 5 separate areas throughout the corps zone. In Binh Dinh Province the 2d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division with 3 airborne infantry battalions, 1 mechanized infantry battalion and 1 cavalry troop was conducting Operation PERSHING II. The 3d Battalion, 503d Airborne Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade was conducting Operation WALKER vicinity the An Khe, Camp Radcliff complex along highway 19 in western Binh Dinh.
The HQ, 173d Airborne Brigade and the 4th Battalion, 503d Airborne Infantry were conducting Operation BOLLING west of Tuy Hoa in Phu Yen Province. In Binh Thuan Province the 3d Battalion, 506th Airborne Infantry, 101st Airborne Division was conducting Operation MR. LAIN vicinity of Phan Thiet. The remainder and the perponderance of US forces was deployed in the western highlands.

The 1st Infantry Division of 2 brigades and 2 battalions of the 173d Airborne Brigade were conducting Operation MACARTHUR and deployed at Tet as follows: the 1st Brigade of 4 infantry battalions west and south of Dak To; the 2d Brigade with 1 infantry battalion, 1 mechanized infantry battalion, 1 airborne infantry battalion, 1 tank battalion, and an armored cavalry squadron from Kontum south to Pleiku; additionally an airborne infantry battalion was northeast of Pleiku, 1 armored cavalry squadron on Highway 19, east of Pleiku, and 1 air cavalry squadron in general support of the division. Major moves by 1st Division elements were the 1st Battalion 22d Infantry to Kontum City from vicinity Pleiku on 30 January; the 1st Battalion, 503d Airborne Infantry from vicinity Camp Enari to Ban Me Thuot on 2 February; and C Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor to Kontum from vicinity Pleiku on 2 February.

The G2 will now review the actions just prior to and during the offensive.

Commencing in the fall of last year the enemy's strategy for prosecuting the war underwent a considerable change. He views the war as a struggle for control of and support by the people. He constantly seeks to win some measure of progress through political and psychological means. His military operations are generally undertaken to support his political objectives. His change in strategy was probably precipitated by the fact that his situation in II Corps was rapidly deteriorating; Revolutionary Development was succeeding; he was losing control of the population; lines of communication were being opened; and he was becoming increasingly dependent on infiltration in order to maintain his forces. In general, time had turned against him.

In a bold effort to reverse his misfortunes in the II Corps area he launched the opening phase of his winter-spring campaign in Kontum Province at Dak To in early November of last year. Though the NVA forces in Kontum suffered severe losses in nearly three weeks of heavy fighting, for the first time the enemy abandoned the practice of backing off when the fighting became costly. The threat represented by twelve enemy battalions then located around Dak To compelled us to draw forces from the coastal areas of Binh Dinh and Phu Yen, thereby creating a situation favorable for repositioning major enemy maneuver elements in the densely populated coastal urban areas.

During the lull which followed Dak To it became more and more apparent that the enemy was regrouping and repositioning his forces in order to renew the offensive at a time and place of his own choosing.

During December and January enemy activity was generally confined to shifting maneuver elements, terrorism, sabotage, interdiction of lines of communication, and attacks by fire. Generally the enemy forces attempted, where possible, to avoid large ground contacts with allied forces. The one area where he was unsuccessful was Binh Dinh Province, ARVN, ROK, and US operations against the 3d NVA Division exacted a heavy toll, killing over 3,000 of the enemy's best troops. Consequently major elements of the 3d NVA Division were unable to participate to any great degree in the Tet offensive.

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Day by Day, in January, intelligence indicated that the enemy was preparing to launch another phase of his campaign. For example on 5 January a document captured in Pleiku Province was, in part, the future battle plan for the Pleiku Provincial Unit. Throughout the zone there was an increasing number of reports of enemy plans and preparations. In late January military units in II Corps were alerted to probable enemy activity just prior to or after Tet.
In the early morning hours of 30 January, in violation of the declared Tet truce the enemy attacked key population centers throughout the zone. The purpose of this offensive against key urban areas, US, Free World and ARVN installations was to disrupt the solidarity between GVN and US/Free World Forces; to destroy allied units; to incite the civil population to demonstrate against the present government of the Republic of Vietnam in the form of a "General Uprising," and to induce a universal clamor for a coalition government.

Within II Corps, as the country-wide offensive began, elements of the 3d NVA Division attacked a major landing zone in Binh Dinh Province while local force elements and a sapper company attacked Qui Nhon, the Province Capital. The fighting in and around Qui Nhon lasted from 30 January to 5 February. During this period elements of the 5th Local Force Battalion and three sapper companies attacked allied installations and GVN Offices in and around the city. Key targets were the Military Security Service (MESS) Headquarters, the 2d Railway Security Compound, radio station and Bach Dang Village. The enemy occupied all target areas despite their defenses by RF/PF elements. The first reaction forces to contact the enemy were four PF platoons stationed in the Bach Dang area. The 405th Scout Company and 1st Battalion, 41st ARVN Regiment were also committed into the Bach Dang area. An RF/PF, National Police Force, and Provincial Police Task Force surrounded the enemy in the radio station and were reinforced by three companies of the 1st Regiment, Capital ROK Division. Two CIDG companies were committed against enemy forces controlling the railroad station. By 31 January all areas were secured. Enemy casualties were 276 killed, 58 PWs, 162 small arms and 11 crew-served weapons captured. Additionally, 12 members of the infrastructure were killed and 31 captured.

In Phu Yen Province, from (30-31 Jan) & (~-6 Feb) elements of the 5th Battalion, 9th NVA Regiment were engaged in and near Tuy Hoa, key targets appear to have been C Battery of the 6/32d Artillery, Binh Tin Hamlet, the Tuy Hoa North Airfield, and the Province Prison. By 0600 hours on the 30th, Company D, 4th Battalion, 603d Airborne Infantry and two companies of the 2d Battalion, 29th ROK Regiment attacked the enemy force that had been attacking C Battery, 6th Battalion, 32d Artillery, Tuy Hoa North Airfield and the prison. By 0730 31 January, the enemy force was surrounded and destroyed in Binh Tin Hamlet. Two ARVN battalions of the 47th Regiment and two RF companies attacked an enemy strong point in the center of Tuy Hoa on 5 February and reduced the stronghold by 6 February.

During the fighting in and around Tuy Hoa the enemy forces lost 316 killed, 107 PWs captured, 107 small arms and 10 crew-served weapons. Infrastructure losses are unknown.

In Khanh Hoa Province elements of the 18B NVA Regiment emerged in an aggressive role for the first time since their limited objective attacks around Ninh Hoa and Nha Trang in October and November. Elements of the 11th Co, 7th Battalion, 18B NVA Regiment and the H-71 Local Force Company attacked facilities in the Ninh Hoa on 30 January. The main objective was the PF Training Center. Enemy forces attacking the RF/PF Training Center were caught between the cross fires of the MAOV Compound and the Ninh Hoa Police Station. At 1200 hours on the 30th, seven companies of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 29th ROK Regiment moved to blocking positions around the city and on the 31st closed their encirclement and had reestablished control. Though there were reports of sporadic contacts through 4 February, the heavier fighting terminated on 31 January. The enemy force lost 41 killed, four PWs, 12 small arms and one crew-served weapon. Though no infrastructure members were killed, five members were captured.

As the enemy proceeded with his systematic, coordinated city offensive, Nha Trang was attacked on 30 January by elements of the 7th Battalion, 18B NVA Regiment, the T68 Recon Company, T69 Engineer Company and the K90 and K9l Sapper Companies. These forces launched their attacks against the sector and province headquarters, the military and civil jails, the radio station, railroad station, and the Roberts Compound area. The enemy suffered heavy losses in their abortive attempt to take key objectives in the city. From 30 to 31 January, 1st NSF, CIDG and Ranger Com-
panies of the 5th Special Forces Group; the 272d MP Company; the 11th Company, 30th ROK Regiment and US, ARVN and ROK Headquarters personnel attacked enemy strongpoints and by 1 February eliminated all but scattered pockets of resistance. In five days of fighting, enemy killed numbered 274, while 76 PW's, 169 small arms and 21 crew-served weapons were captured. Eight infrastructure were killed and 109 suspects detained.

For the first time in several months the 482d Local Force Battalion and the 840th Main Force Battalion launched a major attack in Ninh Thuan Province. At 0315 on the 31st of January elements of the 482d and 840th launched an attack against Phan Thiet. Key targets included the MACV Compound and water point, Binh Thuan Sector Headquarters, an ARVN Artillery Platoon, LZ Betty, the Province Prison, and points along the perimeter of the city. Though the heavier contacts terminated on the 4th, sporadic firing continued into the 10th of February. In many instances the enemy units reportedly concentrated in schools in the northern portion of the city as well as in a large pagoda in the western part of Phan Thiet. The enemy felt certain that these structures would not be fired on. As the fighting in the city died out, it appeared the enemy was withdrawing back to his base areas.

At 0630 on the 31st the first reaction forces to contact the enemy were four PF Platoons; an RF Platoon and a Province Reconnaissance Platoon NW of the town at Xuan Phong. From that time, the 3d Battalion, 506th Airborne Infantry and the 4th Battalion, 44th ARVN Infantry reinforced by the 3d Battalion, 44th ARVN Infantry; two Mobile Strike Force Companies; three RF companies and 15 PF Platoons drove the enemy out of most of the city and had secured the area by 9 February. On 18 February the enemy again attacked Phan Thiet and overran the prison, releasing 500 prisoners. By 23 February the enemy attack had been defeated and the city was under friendly control. The enemy losses were 1256 killed, 48 PW's captured, 253 SA and 88 C/S captured. The infrastructure suffered 60 killed or captured.

In the western highlands the enemy launched attacks against Ban Me Thuot in Darlac Province, Pleiku City in Pleiku Province, and Kontum City and Tan Canh in Kontum Province.

The attack at Ban Me Thuot which began on 30 January and terminated 6 February involved the three Battalions of the 33d NVA Regiment, the 8301 Local Force Battalion, and up to five provincial local force companies. The apparent key targets included the 23d Division Headquarters, the MACV Compound, both airfields, the Province Chief's House and the ARVN Military Compound, the RF/PP Training Center, and the Province Bank. Additionally two churches, missionary buildings and a leprosarium were destroyed. The initial attacks were met by the RF and PF companies and platoons performing their normal security operations. By noon of the 30th, the 23d Recon Company; the 8th ARVN Cav; and the Three Battalions of the 45th ARVN Regiment were in contact. In the early hours of 1 February the 23d Ranger Battalion was deployed to the city and on 2 February the 1st Battalion, 503d Airborne Infantry had reinforced the contact from Pleiku. Final search and clear operations were completed by these forces on 6 February. The enemy lost 919 killed, 186 PW's, 161 small arms and ten crew-served weapons were captured. Infrastructure losses were 25 captured.

The attack on Pleiku City which commenced early on 30 January and terminated on 4 February involved the H-15 Local Force Battalion, the 40th Sapper Battalion and four district companies. Key targets were the Pleiku Sector Headquarter, the MACV Compound, the 71st Evac Hospital, the PW Camp, the New Pleiku and Camp Holloway Airfields, the Province Chief's quarters, and the Montagnard Training Center.

As the enemy attacked, elements of the 22d Ranger Battalion and the 3d ARVN Cav moved to alert positions throughout the city. Co A, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor deployed to the contact areas and reinforced ARVN forces
as did two MSF companies and one RF and one PF company. Elements of the 4th Division Engineer Battalion were airlifted SW of the city and moved into the city conducting a coordinated attack with two MSF companies on enemy strongpoints. By 3 February the joint US, ARVN task force had secured the city and clean up actions were begun. Enemy losses included 632 killed, 182 PW’s, 179 small arms and 10 crew-served weapons. Twenty-five infrastructure members were killed and 160 suspects detained.

Kontum city was struck early on 30 January by three Battalions of the 24th NVA Regiment, the 304th Local Force Battalion and the 406th Sapper Battalion. Some of the heaviest fighting in the Tet Offensive occurred when the enemy forces attempted to take the MACV Compound, Post Office, Finance Office, Province Chief’s Headquarters, the airfield and the 24th STZ Headquarters. The prisoner interrogation center and a church were destroyed.

The initial enemy assault was met by two Montagnard Scout Companies (-), the 2d Battalion, 42d ARVN Infantry (-); two CIDG companies; and RF/PF forces. By noon it was apparent reinforcement was required and the 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry; 7th Troop 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry; and C Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor were moved into the city. ARVN reinforced with the 3d Battalion, 42d ARVN Infantry and two scout companies. By 3-4 February friendly forces conducting search and clear operations were meeting light resistance and all action ceased on the 4th.

The enemy suffered extremely heavy casualties in Kontum losing 1039 killed, 20 PW’s, 206 small arms and 13 crew-served weapons were captured.

Though the city battles in the western highlands are over there are recurring indications in Kontum, Pleiku and Dalat Provinces which suggest that enemy offensive action in these areas are again possible.

The last major city to be struck was the Autonomous City of Dalat, in Tuyen Duc Province. Elements of the 186th Main Force Battalion reinforced by a part of the 145th Main Force Battalion infiltrated the city and attacked at 0100 on 1 February.

The initial attack was met by an RF platoon, armored Car Platoon and sector headquarters personnel. Two RF Companies and the armored Car Platoon supported by gunships were the first reaction force to drive the enemy out of the center of the city on that day. On the 4th of February Three CIDG Companies reinforced the hard pressed regional forces and on 5 February the 23d Ranger Battalion moved into the city. On 8 February the CO, 23d ARVN Division assumed control of all forces in Dalat and reinforced by the 11th Ranger Battalion on 10 Feb attacked the enemy force and secured Dalat on 11 February.

The enemy forces in and around Dalat lost 206 killed, 8 PW’s, 40 small arms and three crew-served weapons in twelve days of fighting. Infrastructure losses were 17 killed and 15 captured.

By 1 February, the enemy had committed forces against major population centers in nine of the twelve provinces in the Zone.

The city attacks cost the enemy 5405 killed and 704 captured, 1327 SA and 127 crew-served captured. Allied losses were 427 killed, 1524 wounded; a ratio of 11.8:1.

As a result of the Tet Offensive, the enemy suffered losses in three areas: man material, and morale. Since early February, however, he has received replacements from infiltration, and has commenced forced conscription of civilians to fill his ranks. He has had an opportunity to resupply to some extent and has attempted to boost morale by propaganda.
The enemy can be expected to exert continuous pressure on urban areas through attacks on lines of communication, imposing economic blockage, eroding GVN control by propaganda, assassination and repeated raids on towns, cities, and district capitals.

The enemy's actions during the Tet period served his purpose to a degree. Militarily it was a failure in the II Corps Tactical Zone. Over 5,400 enemy were killed in a very short period of time. Many of them irreplaceable hard cord VC and infrastructure. More important than the number of enemy killed, the enemy's offensive, during a sacred Vietnamese holiday, disenfranchised the VC/NVA from the people, provided a new found respect for RF/PF forces who responded magnificently and welded the ARVN into a more determined, effective, confident and aggressive fighting force. The enemy was soundly beaten militarily; however, the cost in civilian lives and property lost was a tragic event.

The results of the Tet campaign were generally viewed by the people in the II CTZ as a victory for the GVN. In the few weeks immediately following the offensive it seemed that the majority of the population would most likely remain neutral. This non-committed attitude was due primarily to the fact that the people were still subjected to the influence of both the VC and the GVN. The people's confidence in the GVN to protect them had been greatly reduced as the VC propaganda, prior to the Tet offensive, indicated the cities would be attacked and entered; and the VC did exactly what they promised.

Although many of the people had a non-committed attitude, there is a general agreement among most advisory personnel in the II CTZ with a statement made by the Province Senior Advisor in Kontum, which was, "The VC/NVA Tet offensive has caused the military and the civilian population to solidify in their efforts against the VC. There is a distinct unity of effort, the realization of a national purpose. Additionally, there is a marked indication that the people of Kontum are now acting in behalf of their province and city instead of reacting". The enemy did, however, for the remainder of February put the allied forces partially on the defensive; concerned for the safety of some of the populated areas. Allied initiative was stalemated temporarily and the Psychological impact of the offensive achieved the required notoriety. The since renewed allied offensive on the 1st of March and the increased fighting spirit of ARVN, RF/PF and CIDG forces have already illustrated the real cost to the enemy of his Tet offensive. Time will prove it the catalyst for allied success.

A logical question follows as a result of the Tet action. What did we learn? The major points that can be classified under lessons learned are oriented towards the adequate defense of the populated areas. Considerable emphasis had been placed on a number of these points prior to Tet and the results of the Tet offensive only reinforced the need to tighten up some and implement others. These lessons are:

1. Population Control
   a. Enforcement of curfews.
   b. The need for roving as well as fixed patrols on an irregular time and route basis.
   c. Adequate and functional check points, again on irregular as well as regulated times and places.

2. City Defense Facilities
   a. Central command center.
   b. Central information center.
c. Province Interrogation Center.
d. Coordinated artillery and air support center.
e. Coordination center for reaction forces.

In other words a combined Tactical Operations Center for all interested parties and agencies to provide for a coordinated effort.

3. City Defense Plan
   a. Defined command relationships.
   b. A workable alert notification system.
   c. Rehearsals and practice alerts under simulated attack conditions.

While in each population center conditions varied as to the lessons just mentioned, overall, they do apply in varying degrees.

Gentlemen this concludes the formal portion of the briefing — Do you have questions?