Vietnam Service

1958-1973

Vietnam

Service Medal

Vietnam Service Medal

On its obverse side, the Vietnam Service Medal (VSM) depicts an oriental dragon behind a grove of bamboo; the words REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM SERVICE appear below. On the reverse is a drawn crossbow surmounted by a blazing torch; the words UNITED STATES OF AMERICA are around the bottom edge. The VSM is worn with a suspension ribbon, although a ribbon bar may be worn instead. The ribbon is yellow, representing the color of Vietnam and the Buddhist belief, with 3 red center stripes, symbolizing the 3 ancient Vietnamese empires, Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin China. A green stripe on each edge represents the Vietnamese jungles.

Executive Order No. 11231, July 9, 1965, established the VSM. The period of service is July 4, 1965–March 28, 1973; however, a member awarded the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for Vietnam service (July 1, 1958–July 3, 1965) can apply to have that medal converted to the VSM. Recipients served in combat or with a unit directly supporting a military operation or combat in Southeast Asia; or they served in Vietnam on temporary duty for at least 30 consecutive or 60 nonconsecutive days. A person received a Bronze Service Star for each campaign credit, or Silver Service Star for every 5 campaigns.

Vietnam Service Streamer

The Vietnam Service Streamer is identical to the ribbon in design and color. A USAF unit qualified for the Vietnam Service Streamer if it was based in South Vietnam at any time between July 1, 1958, and November 14, 1961, or January 29 through March 28, 1973;† if it was based during these periods in Thailand and flying missions into or over Vietnam; or if it was based in Thailand, as a non-flying support unit, any time between July 1, 1958, and March 28, 1973. A campaign streamer is a service streamer with the campaign name and dates embroidered on it. With 1 exception (the Vietnam Air/Ground Campaign), a unit qualified for a campaign streamer if it was based in Vietnam or engaged in combat in Southeast Asia during a designated campaign.

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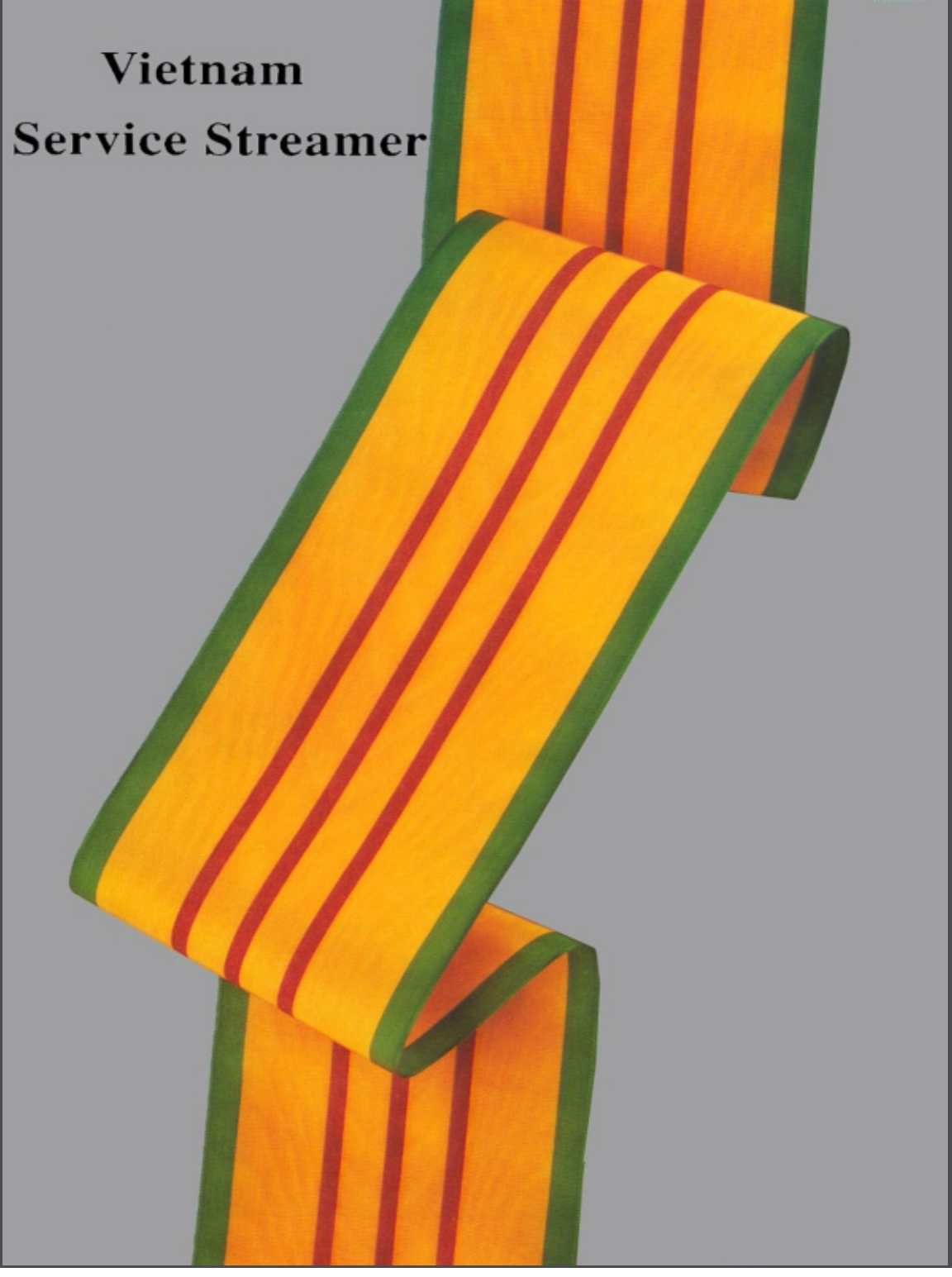
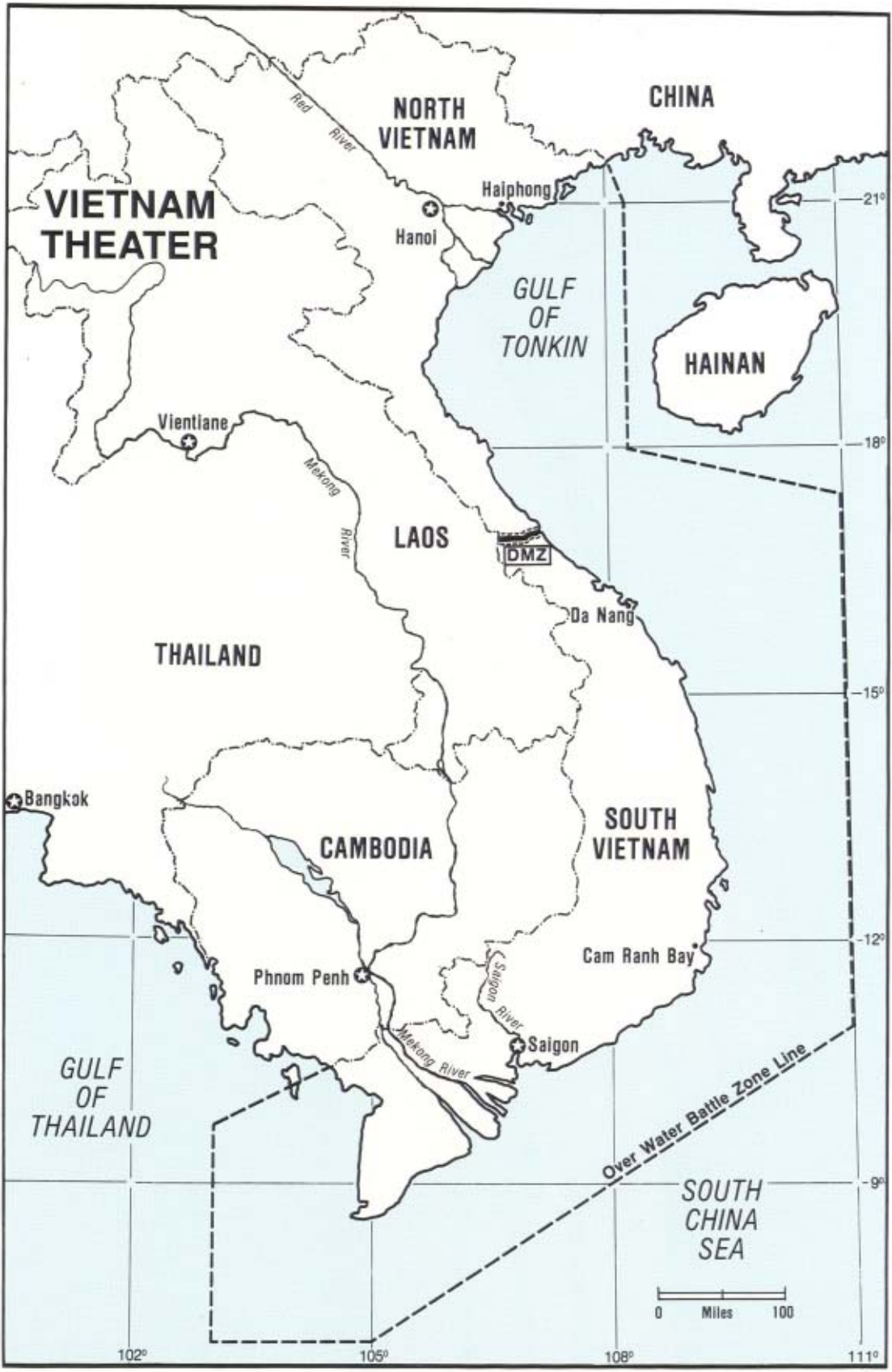
†Units earned the appropriate campaign streamers from November 15, 1961, to January 28, 1973.


Vietnam
Service Streamer


NORTH VIETNAM
CHINA
Red River
VIETNAM THEATER
Haiphong
Hanoi
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
Vientiane
Mekong River
LAOS
DMZ
Da Nang
THAILAND
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Cam Ranh Bay
Phnom Penh
Saigon River
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
21°
18°
15°
12°
9°
102°
105°
108°
111°

Vietnam Campaigns
November 15, 1961—January 28, 1973

Designated Campaigns of Vietnam Service

The USAF designated 17 campaigns for Vietnam Service. As explained in the Introduction, the USAF campaigns in this conflict differed in title and dates from those of the other services. The USAF campaigns appear in chronological sequence from November 15, 1961, through January 28, 1973, with I exception: the Vietnam Air/ Ground Campaign overlaps in time the campaigns immediately preceding and following it, and its designated campaign area is limited exclusively to South Vietnam (Republic of Vietnam). The designated campaign area for the remaining 16 campaigns is South-east Asia; that is, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam—the Theater of Operations for Vietnam Service. The first campaign summarized is the Vietnam Advisory Campaign.


NORTH VIETNAM
CHINA
Red River
Haiphong
Hanoi
21°
Plain of Jars
Xiangkhoang
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
Vientiane
18°
Mekong River
LAOS
DMZ
NOVEMBER 15, 1961 — MARCH 1, 1965
Da Nang
Takhli AB
THAILAND
15°
Pleiku
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Nha Trang AB
Cam Ranh Bay
12°
Phnom Penh
Saigon River
Bien Hoa AB
Binh Gia
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
9°
0 Miles 100
102°
105°
108°
111°

Vietnam Advisory: November 15, 1961—March 1, 1965

On November 15, 1961, the 2d Advanced Echelon (2d ADVON) was activated in Saigon, capital of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). The 2d ADVON, administratively part of the Thirteenth Air Force, controlled USAF units operating in Vietnam and reported to the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam. The 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron's FARM GATE detachment arrived on November 16. The FARM GATE organization, although trained for counter insurgency combat, for about 2 months limited its mission to training Vietnamese aircrews and supporting with reconnaissance flights the operations of the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF). Activation of the 2d ADVON and arrival of the FARM GATE detachment heralded the buildup of the United States Air Force presence in Vietnam.

Responding to the Republic of Vietnam's appeal in December 1961 for increased military aid to counter Communist (Viet Cong) insurgents, the United States gradually increased its forces. From January 2 to 5, 1962, for example, the USAF moved a tactical air control system to South Vietnam and landed equipment and personnel at Tan Son Nhut Air Base (AB) in Saigon; Bien Hoa AB, 15 miles north of Saigon; Da Nang AB, 375 miles northeast of Saigon; Pleiku AB, in the Central Highlands 230 miles northeast of Saigon; and Nha Trang AB, on the coast, a little less than 200 miles northeast of Saigon. Shortly afterwards, on January 7, a flight of C–123s equipped for aerial spray missions arrived at Tan Son Nhut. Code-named RANCH HAND, this USAF detachment 3 days later began defoliation operations that continued for 9 years.

To manage U.S. forces in Vietnam, the Commander in Chief, Pacific Command, at the direction of President John F. Kennedy and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, created Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) on February 8, 1962. Army Gen. Paul D. Harkins was named the first Commander of MACV. The 2d ADVON became the air component of the new command. A few months later, on October 8, the USAF activated the 2d Air Division, which replaced the 2d ADVON. In spite of increased U.S. aid, the Viet Cong insurgency grew, and the government of South Vietnam faced growing civil disorder. A year later, on November 1, 1963, a group of South Vietnamese military officers deposed President Ngo Dinh Diem in a coup d'état, and not until June 1965 would the South Vietnamese establish a reasonably stable government. Meanwhile, on June 20,

1964, Army Gen. William C. Westmoreland became Commander of MACV.

Communist insurgents also operated actively in Laos, and in May 1964 United States involvement in Southeast Asia expanded to include military aid to that country. On June 9, F–100s flying from Takhli Air Base, Thailand, about 110 miles north of Bangkok, made the first USAF strike in Laos. Air Force pilots bombed an antiaircraft installation at Xiangkhoang, on the Plain of Jars, about 100 miles northeast of Vientiane, the Laotian capital. In December 1964 the USAF launched an air interdiction campaign against the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a network of roads, trails, and waterways in the southern Laotian panhandle.

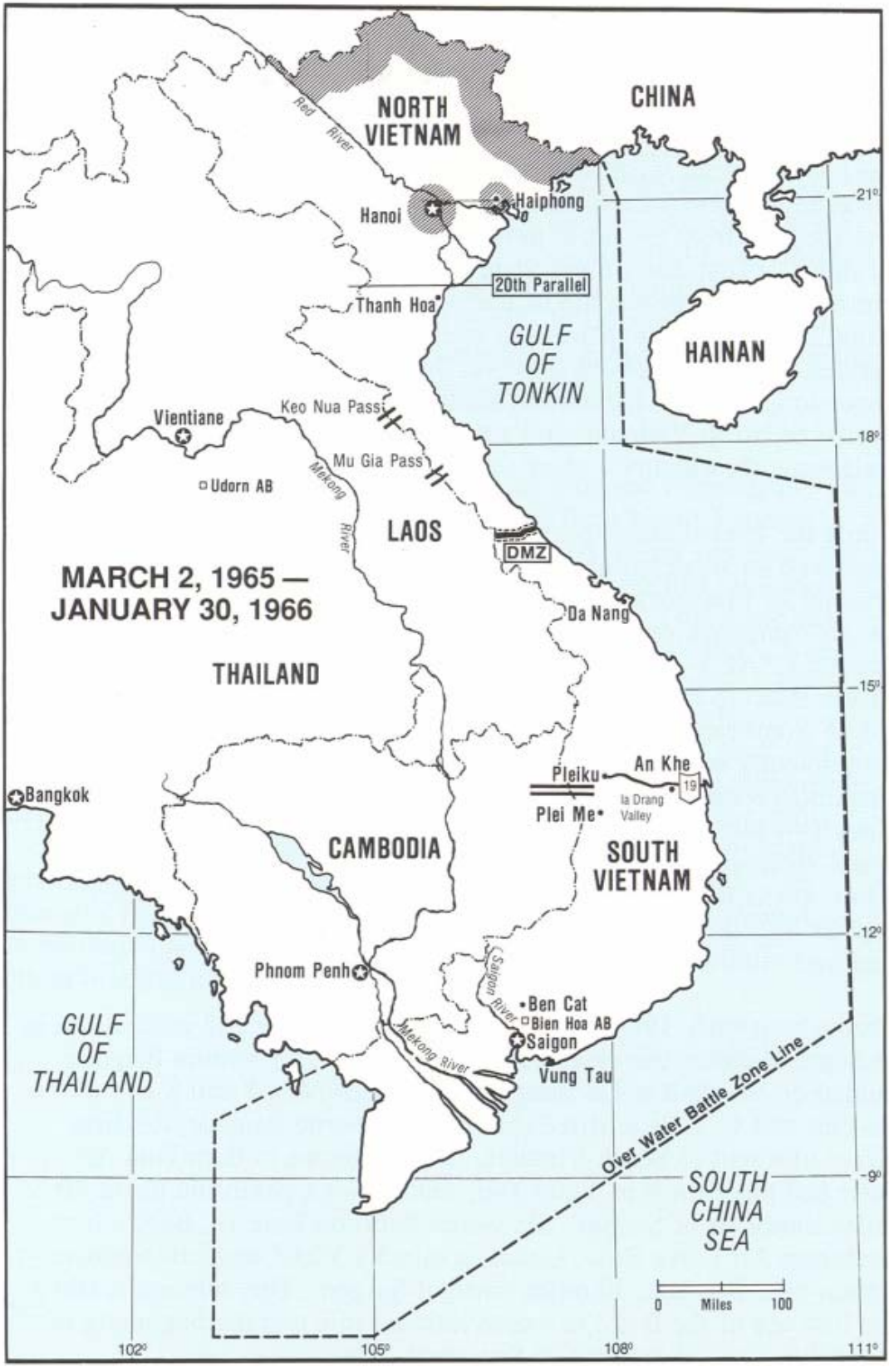
The nature of the conflict in Southeast Asia changed dramatically in late 1964. On August 2 and 4 torpedo boats from North Vietnam (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) attacked U.S. naval vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin. On the 5th, U.S. naval aircraft launched retaliatory air strikes against coastal targets in North Vietnam. That same day the USAF deployed B–57s to Bien Hoa AB and F–100s to Da Nang AB. Then in December 1964 the Viet Cong used conventional field rather than hit-and-run tactics to drive South Vietnamese forces temporarily from Binh Gia, near the coast, only 40 miles southeast of Saigon. For both North and South Vietnam governmental authorities this battle marked an escalation of the conflict. As the war rapidly intensified, on February 7, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered American dependents evacuated from South Vietnam. The same day the Viet Cong shelled Pleiku Air Base. In retaliation, the USAF conducted its first raid against North Vietnam on the 8th, hitting a target just north of the 17th parallel.

Vietnam Defensive: March 2, 1965—January 30, 1966

On March 2, 1965, the United States began an air campaign, known as ROLLING THUNDER, against North Vietnam. This campaign sought to discourage North Vietnamese aggression, reduce infiltration of men and supplies from the north to the south, and raise South Vietnamese morale. At first, the United States limited air strikes to military and transportation targets south of the 20th parallel. After May 18 the target list gradually expanded to include targets north of the 20th parallel. American pilots, however, had to observe a 30-mile buffer zone along the Chinese border; another 30-mile buffer around Hanoi, capital of North Vietnam; and a third buffer 10 miles wide around Haiphong, the country's chief seaport.

While the United States pursued ROLLING THUNDER, North Vietnam improved its air defenses, deploying more antiaircraft guns, jet fighters, and its first surface-to-air missiles. A month after the U.S. began the air campaign, on April 4, 1965, North Vietnamese MiG–17s shot down 2 USAF F–105s bombing a bridge near the coastal town of Thanh Hoa, 76 miles south of Hanoi. These represented the first USAF Southeast Asia losses in air-to-air combat. The Air Force subsequently sent EC–121 radar picket aircraft over the Gulf of Tonkin to warn U.S. strike aircraft of approaching MiGs. On June 17 Navy F–4 pilots shot down 2 MiG–17s, achieving the first American aerial victories of the war. USAF pilots scored their first victories a few weeks later, on July 10, when aircrews of the 45th Tactical Fighter Squadron destroyed 2 MiG–17s with Sidewinder (heat-seeking) missiles.

Throughout early 1965 the number of American air and ground forces in South Vietnam increased rapidly. The U.S. 9th Marine Brigade landed on March 8 at Da Nang, and, between May 5 and 8 USAF C–130s and C–123s airlifted the 173rd Airborne Brigade, the first Army unit sent to South Vietnam, from Okinawa to Bien Hoa Air Base and the village of Vung Tau, situated on a peninsula about 40 miles southeast of Saigon. Six weeks later, on June 18, B–52s from Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, bombed a Viet Cong troop concentration near Ben Cat, 30 miles north of Saigon. This mission marked the first use of the B–52 in a conventional role and the beginning of extensive B–52 operations in Southeast Asia.


NORTH VIETNAM
CHINA
Red River
Haiphong
Hanoi
20th Parallel
Thanh Hoa
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
21°
Vientiane
Keo Nua Pass
Mu Gia Pass
Udorn AB
Mekong River
LAOS
DMZ
18°
MARCH 2, 1965 — JANUARY 30, 1966
Da Nang
THAILAND
15°
Pleiku
An Khe
19
Ia Drang Valley
Plei Me
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
12°
Phnom Penh
Saigon River
Ben Cat
Bien Hoa AB
Saigon
Mekong River
Vung Tau
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
9°
0 Miles 100
102°
105°
108°
111°

On October 19, 1965, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops at-tacked an Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) camp at Plei Me, 30 miles south of Pleiku. The Communists blocked all land routes to Plei Me, forcing the USAF to resupply defenders with parachute drops. Air Force fighters, meantime, provided intensive close air support. On October 23 the U.S. Army moved from An Khe, on the highway and 30 miles east of Pleiku, to break the siege at Plei Me. On November 14 American troops in pursuit of the retreating enemy entered the Ia Drang Valley, immediately to the northwest of Plei Me. The Communist forces fought fiercely to defend their supply base in the valley, but with close air support and B–52 strikes, the Allies drove the enemy across the border into Cambodia.

As the conflict expanded and intensified still further in late 1965, North Vietnam increased the number of personnel and amount of equipment and supplies moving south, primarily over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. To slow this infiltration of men and supplies into South Vietnam, reconnaissance aircraft located enemy trucks, bridges, troops, and storage areas. Strike aircraft, refueled by KC–135 tankers, later hit these targets on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the Mu Gia and Keo Nua (Nape) Passes, principal entry points on the Laotian/North Vietnamese border. On Christmas Day 1965 the United States ceased all bombing in North Vietnam for 37 days in an attempt to promote peace negotiations. The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, however, used the interlude to rebuild their military forces.


CHINA
NORTH VIETNAM
Red River
Hanoi
Haiphong
21°
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
Vientiane
18°
Mu Gia Pass
Mekong River
HO CHI MINH TRAIL
LAOS
DMZ
Hue
A Shau
JANUARY 31 — JUNE 28, 1966
THAILAND
15°
Attopeu
Dak To
Kontum
Pleiku
19
Qui Nhon
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
12°
Song Be
Phnom Penh
Tay Ninh
Saigon River
Bien Hoa AB
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
9°
0 Miles 100
102°
105°
108°
111°

Vietnam Air: January 31—June 28, 1966

However intended, the 37-day bombing halt failed to prompt peace negotiations, and on January 31, 1966, the U.S. resumed aerial attacks against North Vietnam. USAF and U.S. Navy pilots soon brought practically all of North Vietnam under attack, even though targets in the restricted zones had to be approved in Washington—a procedure that greatly limited the number of strikes near Hanoi, Haiphong, and the Chinese border. On April 11 B–52s on their first raid over North Vietnam dropped 600 tons of munitions on the Mu Gia Pass to interdict forces and supplies on their way to the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

North Vietnam's air defenses continued to claim U.S. aircraft, al-though in air-to-air battles the victory-to-loss ratio favored the United States. To counter surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), the USAF deployed WILD WEASEL F–100Fs equipped with radar warning and homing sets to pinpoint SAM radars and mark them for F–105 IRON HAND strikes. After April 18, 1966, the WILD WEASELS also carried strike missiles that homed on radar signals to destroy the SAM sites. Between May and July, F–105s replaced F–100s as WILD WEASEL aircraft.

While the air war escalated in North Vietnam, Allied ground forces required increased air support in South Vietnam. During January and February 1966, the U.S. Army, in cooperation with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam and other Allied ground forces, engaged the Viet Cong in a series of attacks designed to drive them from long-held areas. The Allied ground forces operated in the Central Highlands near Dak To, a village and airfield about 280 miles northeast of Saigon; Kontum, the provincial capital 20 miles south of Dak To; and Pleiku. Allied forces also conducted operations along Highway 19 between Pleiku and Qui Nhon and near Saigon and Tay Ninh, 50 miles northwest of Saigon. These operations called for extensive airlift, aerial resupply, and close air support from the USAF.

To control the growing, diverse air operations in South Vietnam, the USAF on April 1, 1966, activated the Seventh Air Force in place of the 2d Air Division. Its former Commander, Lt. Gen. Joseph H. Moore, assumed command of the Seventh. A few days later, on the 10th, USAF C–130s flew 129 sorties to move an entire U.S. Army brigade from Bien Hoa to Song Be, 60 miles north. The brigade conducted search and destroy missions in the area before returning to Bien Hoa by air on April 22 and 23.

Although generally successful in search and destroy operations, the Allies did suffer some reverses. Perhaps the most significant was the loss of the South Vietnamese Special Forces Camp at A Shau, on the Laotian border some 30 miles southwest of the old Vietnamese imperial capital of Hue. In spite of USAF close air support with AC—47 gunships and A—1 fighters, the North Vietnamese overran the camp on March 9—10. The enemy subsequently developed the A Shau Valley as a major logistics base with a road network to the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

In Laos the USAF continued to bomb the Ho Chi Minh Trail and provide close air support for Laotian forces battling Communist Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese Army (NV A) troops. In one engagement, on March 4 and 5, the enemy attacked Royal Laotian forces at Attopeu in the panhandle of Laos, about 270 miles north of Saigon. Two USAF AC—47s provided close air support to help break the attack. The USAF also used B—52s extensively to fly more than 400 interdiction sorties over the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos during the first half of 1966.

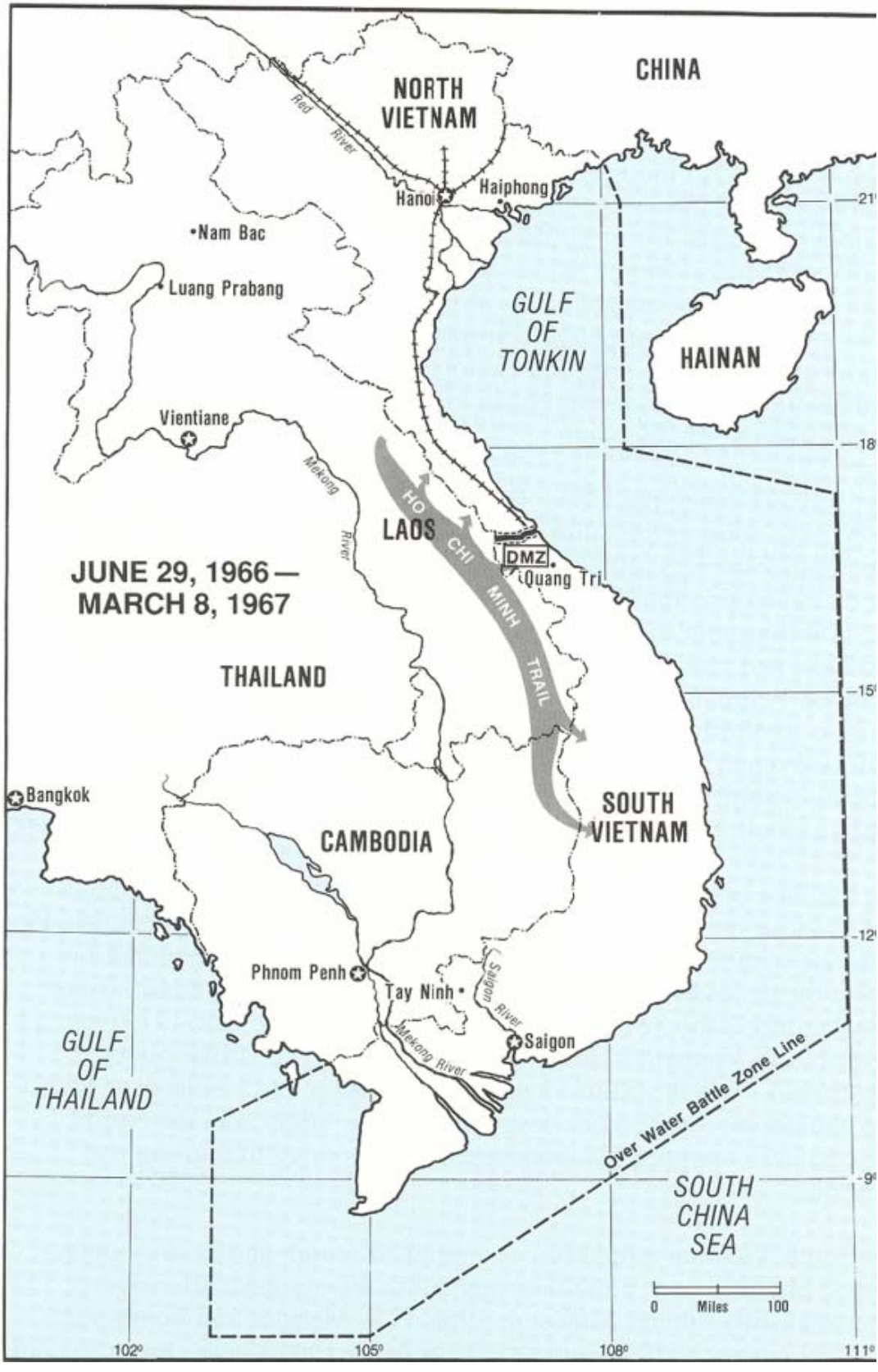
Vietnam Air Offensive: June 29, 1966—March 8, 1967

On June 29, 1966, the USAF bombed petroleum storage and distribution facilities for the first time in the immediate vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong, after political leaders authorized limited and specific strikes within the buffer zones for these cities. Gen. William W. Momyer replaced General Moore as Seventh Air Force Commander on July 1. The United States expanded the ROLLING THUNDER campaign as of July 9 to include petroleum targets in the northeast and rail lines and highways between China and Hanoi, although the buffer zone on the border limited targets. American aircraft also flew armed reconnaissance over North Vietnam.

On July 30, 1966, the USAF bombed targets in the demilitarized zone (DMZ) to counter the build-up of North Vietnamese forces there. By September the U.S. air campaign against North Vietnam had destroyed or damaged two-thirds of the enemy's petroleum storage capacity, several thousand trucks and watercraft, hundreds of rail cars and bridges, and numerous ammunition and supply storage areas. Beginning on February 14, 1967, USAF aircraft hit additional strategic targets in North Vietnam, knocking out major power plants, and railyard repair facilities. But these results had little effect on the enemy's ability to carry on the war, because the country possessed only a small industrial base and imported most of its military materiel.

In the face of extensive air attacks, North Vietnam further strengthened its air defenses. By January 1967, the United States had lost 455 aircraft within 2 years. Antiaircraft guns and SAMs accounted for most of the losses, but MiGs continued to challenge U.S. air strikes. On January 2 the Seventh Air Force enticed a large MiG–21 force over North Vietnam into battle against F-4s. The USAF pilots destroyed 7 MiGs within 12 minutes without a loss. Four days later, on January 6, the Seventh destroyed 2 more MiGs, and the North Vietnamese temporarily abandoned aerial combat to regroup and retrain.

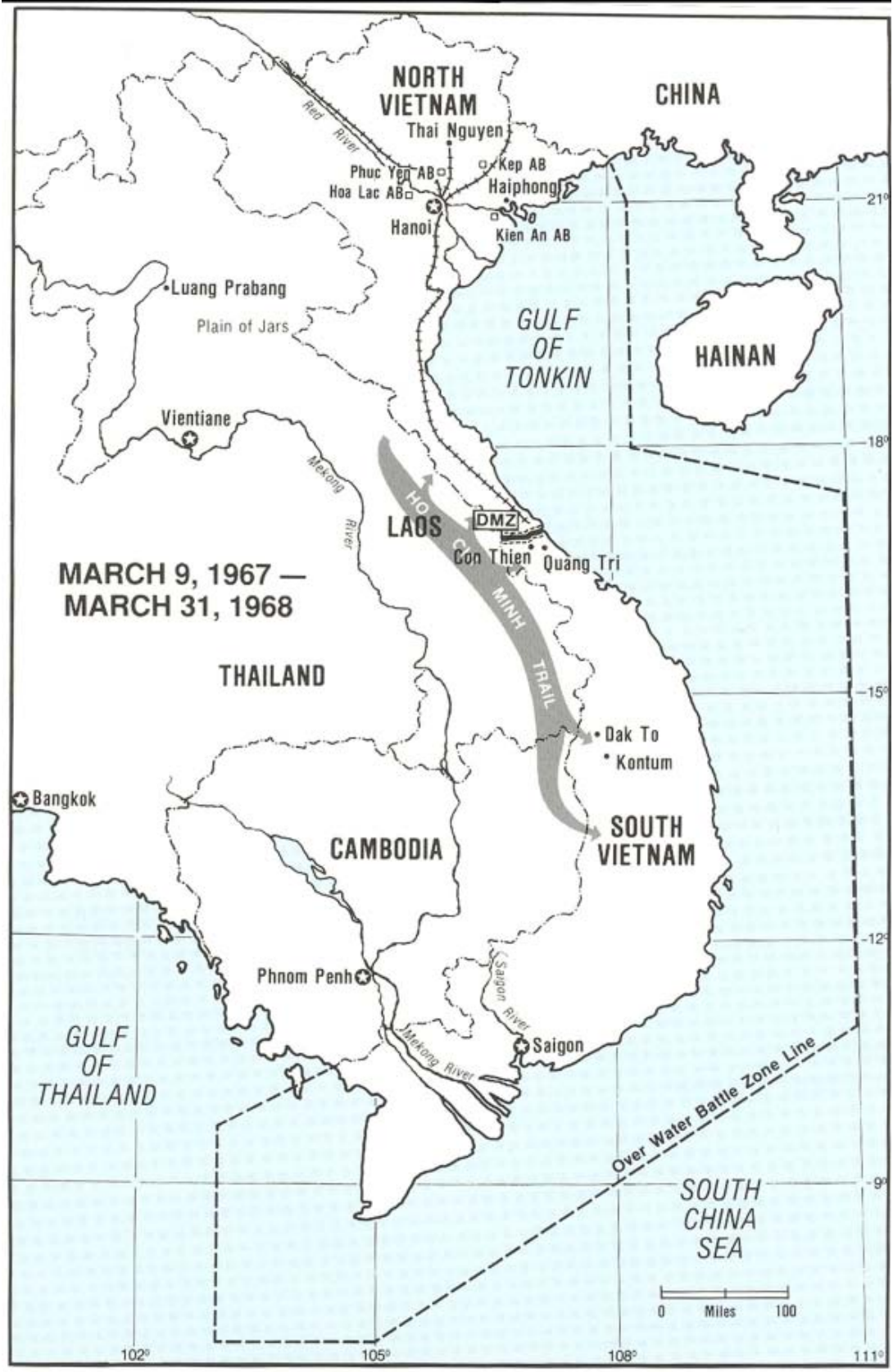
In South Vietnam Allied forces continued search and destroy operations, blunting new Viet Cong and North Vietnamese offensives. Between July 14 and August 4, 1966, U.S. Marines and South Vietnamese troops battled North Vietnam Army forces near Quang Tri, 20 miles south of the DMZ. Later, between October 15 and November 26, the Allies engaged in a major battle with Viet Cong and NVA


NORTH VIETNAM
CHINA
Red River
Hanoi
Haiphong
•Nam Bac
Luang Prabang
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
Vientiane
Mekong River
HO CHI MINH TRAIL
LAOS
DMZ
Quang Tri
JUNE 29, 1966 — MARCH 8, 1967
THAILAND
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Phnom Penh
Tay Ninh
Saigon River
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
102°
105°
108°
111°

forces northwest of Tay Ninh, near the Cambodian border, 60 miles northwest of Saigon. Enemy resistance was light at first, but on November 4, as ARVN and U.S. troops approached storage areas, the Viet Cong and NVA counterattacked. The Allies responded by airlifting more troops, including elements of the U.S. Army's 1st, 4th, and 25th Infantry Divisions, and the 173rd Airborne Brigade. The USAF provided close air support, and between November 8 and 25, B–52s bombed targets in the area. The Allies drove the enemy from the region temporarily, seizing weapons, ammunition, food, and other supplies that the Communist forces left behind.

The next year, between February and May 1967, U.S. Army units joined ARVN forces to return to Tay Ninh Province, about 50 miles north of Saigon and 15 miles northeast of Tay Ninh. Seventh Air Force C–130s dropped American paratroopers near the Cambodian border to cut off the Viet Cong retreat. The airlifters also flew reinforcements and supplies to the ground troops during this operation. With the help of forward air controllers flying O-1s, Air Force F–100 and F–4 pilots provided close air support, and AC–47 gunship crews illuminated targets and conducted air strikes at night. Again, the enemy withdrew into Cambodia, leaving behind weapons, sup-plies, and ammunition.

In the panhandle of Laos, the USAF pounded enemy forces on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, while in northern Laos U.S. pilots supported Allied forces under attack. By August 1966 Laotian troops fighting Pathet Lao insurgents had advanced, with the aid of U.S. close air support, to Nam Bac, only 45 miles west of the North Vietnamese border and about 55 miles northeast of Luang Prabang, an ancient city on the Mekong River some 130 miles north of Vientiane. The Laotian gains were short lived, however, and by February 2, 1967, the insurgents had regained lost territory and were in a position to attack the airfield at Luang Prabang.


NORTH VIETNAM
CHINA
Red River
Thai Nguyen
Kep AB
Phuc Yen AB
Haiphong
Hoa Lac AB
Hanoi
Kien An AB
Luang Prabang
Plain of Jars
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
Vientiane
Mekong River
HO CHI MINH TRAIL
LAOS
DMZ
Con Thien
Quang Tri
MARCH 9, 1967 — MARCH 31, 1968
THAILAND
Dak To
Kontum
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Phnom Penh
Saigon River
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
21°
18°
15°
12°
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102°
105°
108°
111°

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase II: March 9, 1967—March 31, 1968

On March 10, 1967, Seventh Air Force F–105s and F–4s bombed a new target, the Thai Nguyen iron and steel plant, 30 miles north of Hanoi. The ROLLING THUNDER bombing campaign continued with strikes against bridges, petroleum storage, cement plants, and power transformer stations near Hanoi. USAF and naval aircraft also con-ducted armed reconnaissance over most of North Vietnam. Missions against major supply routes from China targeted railroad yards, repair facilities, bridges, and support areas. Early in August 1967 American air attacks against the Paul Doumer Bridge in Hanoi knocked out the center span. Poor weather in the first 3 months of 1968 forced U.S. aircraft to rely almost exclusively on all-weather bombing techniques in North Vietnam; nevertheless, the Paul Doumer Bridge remained unusable most of the time. While overland routes might be interdicted, Haiphong harbor and docks still remained off limits to U.S. pilots. A continuous flow of supplies moved through the port from the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, which largely offset North Vietnam's losses.

U.S. aircraft used electronic countermeasures and other techniques to limit the effectiveness of North Vietnam's antiaircraft defenses. North Vietnamese forces fired 55 SAMs on the average for each U.S. aircraft destroyed. To reduce the threat of a resurgent North Vietnamese Air Force, in April 1967 the United States bombed MiG bases, destroying several jet aircraft on the ground. In aerial combat during the first 6 months of 1967 (primarily in April, May, and June), U.S. pilots destroyed 54 MiGs while losing 11 aircraft. But between August 1967 and February 1968, the United States lost 18 aircraft to MiGs while destroying only 5 enemy aircraft. On January 14, 1968, two MiGs shot down an EB—66 that was jamming enemy radars from an orbit 90 miles from Hanoi. The USAF subsequently used the vulnerable EB–66s in already established orbits over Laos and the Gulf of Tonkin, accepting degradation of jamming to lessen the risks of aerial interception.

On April 6, 1967, the North Vietnam Army and Viet Cong forces attacked Quang Tri, the northernmost provincial capital, 20 miles south of the demilitarized zone. To counter the offensive, on May 18 South Vietnamese and U.S. troops entered the DMZ for the first time. USAF B—52s, tactical air forces, and naval and army artillery strikes combined with Allied ground forces to destroy temporarily NVA

strength in the zone. The NVA then shifted its artillery positions north of the DMZ, rebuilt its forces in the area, and on September 1 renewed attacks on the U.S. Marine base at Con Thien, immediately south of the DMZ. With forward air controllers pinpointing artillery and other targets, the USAF began an aerial attempt to destroy enemy positions, and by October 4 the North Vietnam Army had been forced to withdraw once again.

Shortly afterward, in November 1967, U.S. forces conducting search and destroy operations in the Central Highlands encountered strong Viet Cong resistance near Dak To, 15 miles east of the border junction between Laos, Cambodia, and the Republic of Vietnam. Tactical aircraft and B—52s provided close air support while USAF C—130s flew supplies and reinforcements to the Dak To airstrip. U.S. airpower inflicted heavy casualties, and the enemy withdrew on November 24.

In the Laotian part of the conflict, during the summer of 1967, Seventh Air Force provided extensive air support to Laotian troops battling the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces on the Plain of Jars near Luang Prabang. The Ho Chi Minh Trail in the Laotian panhandle also came under constant attack. Between December 1967 and February 1968, Seventh Air Force pilots flew over 20,000 sorties against transportation lines in Laos and claimed destruction of more than 3,000 trucks. But the Communists continued to build up forces in Laos and Cambodia in preparation for a major offensive that began on January 21, 1968, when the NVA surrounded and laid siege to Khe Sanh, a U.S. Marine base in a valley 7 miles east of the Laotian border and 15 miles south of the demilitarized zone.

Vietnam Air/Ground: January 22-July 7, 1968

The air campaign in defense of Khe Sanh, an outpost held by the U.S. 26th Marine Regiment, began on January 22, 1968. For 2 and 1 /2 months Allied tactical air forces continuously attacked targets surrounding the base, and B—52s dropped bombs near Khe Sanh on an average of every 90 minutes. At night AC—47 gunships provided illumination and close air support. Air Force and Marine airlifters, mostly C–130s, frequently landed under fire at the Khe Sanh airstrip, bringing in supplies and reinforcements and flying out the wounded and refugees. When the transports could no longer land because of intense mortar and artillery fire, their crews used parachutes and arrester cables to extract cargo from the aircraft as they flew a few feet above the ground over the airstrip. Beginning on March 6 the Seventh Air Force provided fighter escorts to suppress enemy fire and lay down smoke screens until the C—130s dropped their cargoes. Gen. William C. Westmoreland, MACV Commander, encountered difficulties coordinating the air resources of the USAF and U.S. Marines to meet both the military demands at Khe Sanh and the requirements introduced by the Tet Offensive that the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong launched on January 30, 1968. On March 8 he appointed the Seventh Air Force Commander, Gen. William W. Momyer, as Deputy Commander for Air Operations, MACV, to manage all tactical air resources in South Vietnam.

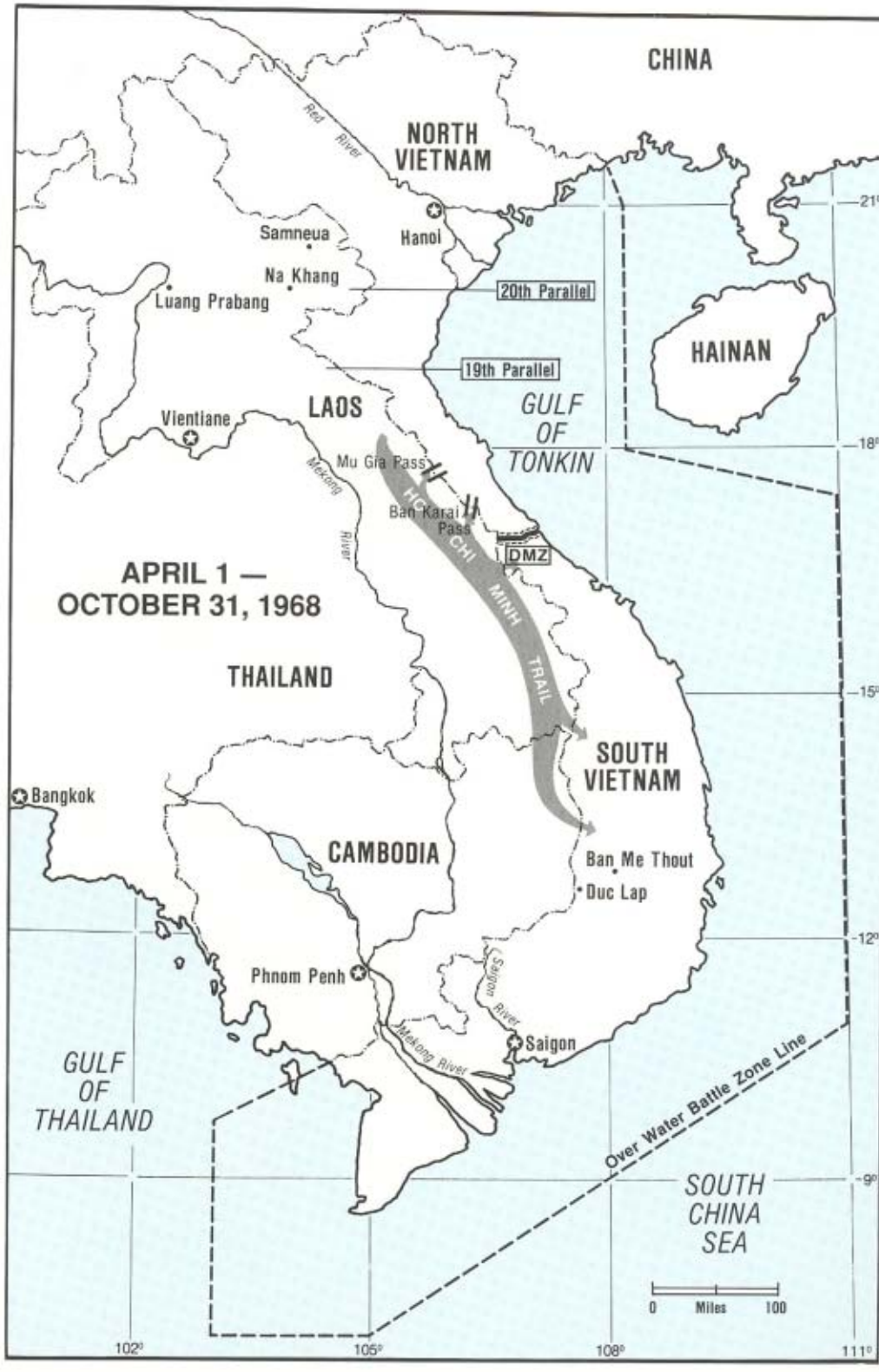
Late in March 1968 the North Vietnamese surrounding Khe Sanh withdrew, leaving only a single NVA division to oppose the Allied advance. On April 1 the 1st Marine regiment and the Army's 1st Cavalry Division moved along Route 9, relieving Khe Sanh 5 days later. On April 10, for the first time in 4 8 days, no shells fell on the base.

A week later, on April 19, the Allies mounted a helicopter-borne attack against A Shau Valley on the Laotian border, 30 miles south-west of Hue. The Viet Cong and NVA had built a vast stores and logistical base in this area since 1966. Preliminary USAF and Allied air strikes, including B–52 bombings between April 8 and 13, 1968, failed to clear the enemy from landing zones. In spite of the heavy resistance, on April 24 the U.S. Army seized the A Luoi airstrip at the northwest end of the valley. USAF transports airdropped supplies, often during bad weather and without tactical air support, because intense ground fire prevented the landing of C–130s until May 4. The


GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
18°
Mekong River
DMZ
LAOS
Dong Ha
9
Khe Sanh
Quang Tri
Hue
A Luoi
THAILAND
15°
SOUTH VIETNAM
CAMBODIA
12°
Phnom Penh
Mekong River
Saigon River
Bien Hoa AB
Tan Son Nhut AB
Saigon
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
9°
SOUTH CHINA SEA
JANUARY 22 — JULY 7, 1968
0 Miles 52
105°
108°

Viet Cong and North Vietnamese withdrew into Laos in mid-May, leaving behind large caches of weapons and supplies.

Earlier in the year, on January 30, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese launched the Tet (Buddhist New Year) Offensive throughout South Vietnam in an effort to regain the political and military initiative that they had held 2 years previously. At Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut Air Bases, alert base defenders successfully repulsed initial attacks, but in the next 2 weeks the air bases came under frequent mortar and rocket attacks; in all, the USAF lost 14 aircraft on the ground and another 114 damaged. During the Tet Offensive, Seventh Air Force pilots provided close air support for Allied troops, and C–7s and C–130s hauled ammunition, supplies, and reinforcements to isolated areas. Within 2 or 3 days Allied forces cleared the Viet Cong troops from all cities except Saigon and Hue. By February 5 the Allies had driven the Viet Cong from Saigon, although a large force remained in the vicinity. North Vietnamese forces that had taken the old imperial city of Hue were more difficult to dislodge. The Seventh Air Force used close air support carefully to avoid indiscriminate and unwanted damage in Hue; AC–130 gunships that could deliver precise fire day or night provided the most effective support. On February 25 Allied forces succeeded in driving the enemy from the city. Although the Allies successfully and rapidly countered the Tet Offensive, the Communists gained a significant propaganda victory. Many Americans believed that a failure of U.S. military policy had permitted the Communists to mount so extensive a battle throughout South Vietnam.


CHINA
NORTH VIETNAM
Red River
Hanoi
Samneua
Na Khang
Luang Prabang
20th Parallel
19th Parallel
HAINAN
GULF OF TONKIN
LAOS
Vientiane
Mu Gia Pass
Ban Karai Pass
HO CHI MINH TRAIL
DMZ
Mekong River
APRIL 1 — OCTOBER 31, 1968
THAILAND
SOUTH VIETNAM
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
Ban Me Thout
Duc Lap
Phnom Penh
Saigon River
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
21°
18°
15°
12°
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102°
105°
108°
111°

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase III: April 1—October 31, 1968

On April 1, 1968, the United States suspended bombing in North Vietnam north of the 20th parallel to encourage North Vietnam to agree to peace negotiations, which it did 2 days later. At that time, President Lyndon B. Johnson moved the bombing ban farther south to the 19th parallel. U.S. and North Vietnamese diplomats met in Vientiane, Laos, on April 25 to choose a site for the peace talks, and on May 3 they agreed to meet in Paris, France. Preliminary discussions between representatives of the United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam began in Paris on May 10. A month later, on June 11, Gen. Creighton Abrams, USA, became Commander of MACV. Then, on August 1, Gen. George S. Brown replaced General Momyer as Commander, Seventh Air Force.

On July 14, 1968, the U.S. began another interdiction campaign between the 19th parallel and the DMZ. American pilots struck rail cars, watercraft, trucks, and storage areas. They also bombed roads leading to Mu Gia and Ban Karai Passes on the Laotian border to disrupt movement of North Vietnamese supplies and personnel into Laos, destined for South Vietnam. Following the cessation of bombing north of the 19th parallel, North Vietnam began to rebuild its industry, transportation network, stores of war materiel, and air defenses. It also moved its MiGs, most of which had been based in China, back into the country. Still, North Vietnamese pilots generally avoided the panhandle south of the 19th parallel. Attempting to encourage progress in the Paris peace negotiations, President Johnson on October 31, 1968, ordered a halt to all bombing in North Vietnam.

The conflict in Laos became more active in 1968, as the Communists increased their efforts during April to send supplies, equipment, and personnel down the Ho Chi Minh Trail before the impending monsoon wet season (mid-May to early October) made the roads impassable. To counter this infiltration, between April 19 and June 10, B—52 crews, flying up to 30 sorties each day, bombed truck parks and storage areas along the trail. The Seventh Air Force, meantime, used its tactical assets to hit small targets, such as trucks and other surface traffic on the move, and to make follow-up raids on the B—52 targets along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. In northern Laos the USAF continued to provide close air support to Laotian troops battling the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces. In

May 1968 the enemy massed forces at Na Khang, 150 miles northeast of Vientiane and 100 miles east of

Luang Prabang. The USAF increased its close air support in the face of this threat, and by the end of October, the Laotians had driven the Communist forces back to Samneua, about 35 miles northeast of Na Khang.

In South Vietnam, during the summer of 1968, the USAF flew close air support, interdiction, and airlift missions in support of Allied forces, while the Communists launched another offensive. A typical Communist attack occurred on August 23 against Duc Lap, a border camp 3 miles east of Cambodia and 35 miles southwest of Ban Me Thuot, a town 160 miles northeast of Saigon. The next day the 483rd Tactical Airlift Wing's C–7s joined U.S. Army helicopters in resupplying and reinforcing Duc Lap. Heavy tactical air strikes drove the enemy from the camp's perimeter and suppressed enemy fire, permitting aerial resupply. To help check similar attacks, USAF tactical aircraft and B–52s provided close air support while airlifters flew in or airdropped supplies to several other Army Special Forces camps. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese were not nearly as well equipped as they had been during the Tet Offensive, and by mid-September the Allies had blunted this offensive.

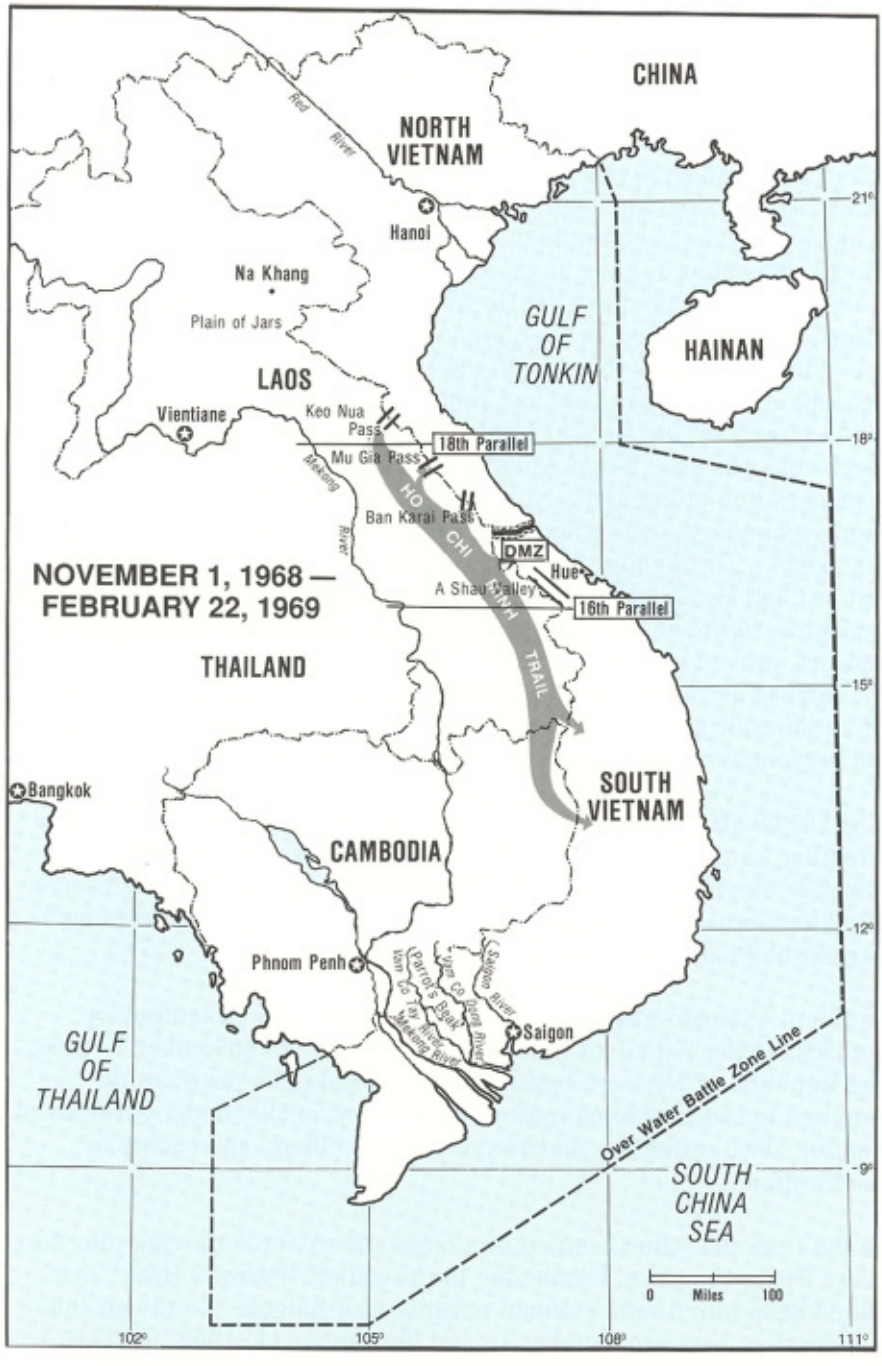
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase IV: November 1, 1968—February 22, 1969

Following the cessation of bombing on October 31, 1968, the United States for the next 4 years restricted flights over North Vietnam primarily to reconnaissance missions. The Air Force diverted airpower resources committed to the campaign over North Vietnam to the air campaign in Laos, in an attempt to slow the flow of supplies from North Vietnam down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This interdiction effort covered an area in the Laotian panhandle from about the 16th to the 18th parallel and focused on the Laotian/North Vietnamese border near the Keo Nua, Mu Gia, and Ban Karai Passes. Much information about targets on the Ho Chi Minh Trail came from air-dropped electronic sensors. When American bombing choked the major transportation arteries, the North Vietnamese directed truck convoys along secondary roads where they became more vulnerable to tactical air strikes. Throughout November and December 1968 U.S. tactical aircraft and B—52s attacked targets in the Laotian panhandle; AC—130 gunships, flying at night and relying on infrared, radar, and other sensors, proved especially effective in destroying trucks. To counter the intense air attacks, the North Vietnamese quadrupled the number of antiaircraft guns along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, while adding logistical personnel in Laos for repair work and transport duties.

The USAF also provided close air support to hard-pressed Royal and irregular Laotian forces in northern Laos, where, on December 25, North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops launched a strong offensive. By late February 1969 the enemy had driven the Laotian forces back across the Plain of Jars to Na Khang.

In South Vietnam, meanwhile, the Viet Cong suffered temporary setbacks under Allied air and ground attacks. On November 1, 1968, the Republic of Vietnam began a military and civic pacification program intended to bring most of the country quickly under government control. Two operations underscored Allied military approaches to pacification.

In the first, the Allies learned of a large enemy force moving into the Savy Rieng Province, Cambodia, the so-called "Parrot's Beak" that jutted deep into South Vietnam northwest of Saigon. To thwart this penetration, between October 18 and November 11, 1968, the U.S. Air Force airlifted 11,500 men of the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division and 3,400 tons of cargo in C—130s over 500 miles from Quang Tri Prov-


CHINA
NORTH VIETNAM
Red River
Hanoi
Na Khang
Plain of Jars
LAOS
Vientiane
Keo Nua Pass
Mu Gia Pass
Ban Karai Pass
18th Parallel
16th Parallel
DMZ
Hue
A Shau Valley
HO CHI MINH TRAIL
Mekong River
NOVEMBER 1, 1968 — FEBRUARY 22, 1969
THAILAND
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Phnom Penh
Saigon
Saigon River
Vam Co Tay River
Vam Co Dong River
Parrot's Beak
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
21°
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15°
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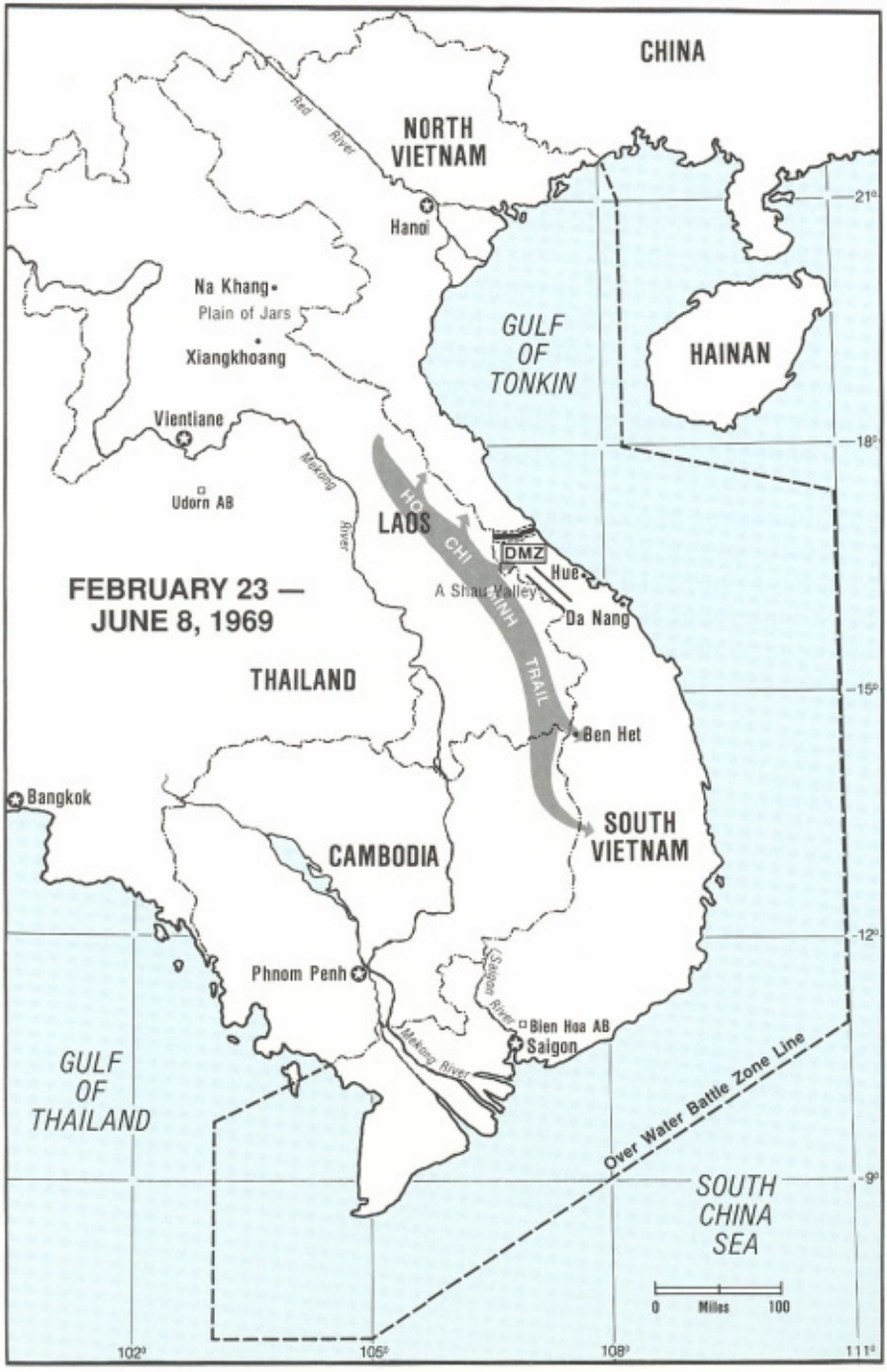
ince in the north to Tay Ninh, Binh Long, and Phuoc Long Provinces, northwest of Saigon. Until the turn of the year, these U.S. Army forces, working with the South Vietnamese, conducted operations in the Cambodian/South Vietnamese border area along the Parrot's Beak, between the Vam Co Tay and Vam Co Dong Rivers. The USAF supported these operations with tactical aircraft and B—52s flying air support and interdiction missions against troop concentrations, base areas, logistics complexes, and transportation lines. In the second major winter operation, starting the first week of December, the Seventh Air Force launched another air campaign in the A Shau Valley, located near the Cambodian border some 30 miles southwest of Hue. Afterward, in January 1969, U.S. Marines entered the valley and found large amounts of materiel that the Communists had abandoned, unable to move it during the sustained air attacks.

After months of negotiations, on January 18, 1969, representatives of the government of South Vietnam and of the National Liberation Front, the Communist political branch in South Vietnam, joined the United States and North Vietnam in the Paris peace talks. While negotiations continued in France, the Communist forces in Vietnam launched their first offensive of the new year.


CHINA
NORTH VIETNAM
Red River
Hanoi
Na Khang
Plain of Jars
Xiangkhoang
Vientiane
Udorn AB
Mekong River
LAOS
HO CHI MINH TRAIL
DMZ
Hue
A Shau Valley
Da Nang
Ben Het
FEBRUARY 23 — JUNE 8, 1969
THAILAND
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Phnom Penh
Saigon River
Bien Hoa AB
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
21°
18°
15°
12°
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102°
105°
108°
111°

Tet 69/Counteroffensive: February 23—June 8, 1969

On February 23, 1969, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese launched mortar and rocket attacks on Saigon, Da Nang, Hue, Bien Hoa Air Base, and other key targets throughout South Vietnam. In this offensive, Communist forces relied heavily on the use of stand-off fire-power in hit-and-run attacks, since, in the previous year's offensives, Allied ground operations and air interdiction efforts had countered the Communists' logistical capacity to wage conventional battles. By March 30 the Allies had blunted the hit-and-run attacks, and the enemy withdrew into Cambodian and Laotian sanctuaries to restock their munitions and weapons inventories.

Later in the spring, on May 12, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese launched a second phase, consisting of more than 200 attacks in South Vietnam, the heaviest assault since the 1968 Tet Offensive. An intense battle in the A Shau Valley required USAF close air support and tactical airlift of supplies and reinforcements until May 20, when the U.S. Army captured Ap Bia Mountain, thus enabling Allied aircraft to land in the A Shau Valley without receiving mortar fire. Another significant battle occurred at Ben Het Defense Camp, located about 260 miles northeast of Saigon, where the Cambodian/Laotian borders join the boundary of South Vietnam. Here, the USAF employed AC—47 and AC—119 gunships at night and tactical air and B—52 strikes during the day in support of the defenders. Fighter aircraft laid down suppressive fire to permit C—7s to drop supplies to the besieged forces. By the end of June the Allies had forced the enemy's withdrawal.

Throughout this campaign, the USAF joined the Vietnamese Air Force and the other U.S. services in close air support of Allied forces throughout South Vietnam and in a continuing interdiction campaign, COMMANDO HUNT I, along South Vietnam's borders with Laos and Cambodia. In Laos Air Force pilots joined Navy aviators to hit targets along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, where North Vietnam, no longer having to protect its lines of communication and storage areas north of the demilitarized zone, had shifted more antiaircraft defenses. The USAF consequently relied heavily on high-flying B—52s and such fast tactical aircraft as F—4s and F—105s for most missions over the trail. AC—130 gunships, though flying less than 4 percent of the missions in Laos, nevertheless accounted in the spring of 1969 for 44 percent of the trucks claimed damaged or destroyed.

In northeastern Laos AC—47 gunships provided close air support to Royal Laotian and irregular forces battling North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops. On March 2, 1969, the Royal Laotian forces abandoned Na Khang under cover of USAF aircraft. Then on the 12th the USAF deployed AC—47s to Udorn, a Royal Thai Air Force Base 40 miles south of Vientiane, Laos, to defend forward Royal Laotian air bases. The USAF and the Royal Laotian Air Force on March 23 began a new Laotian counteroffensive with air attacks on targets in the Xiangkhoang area of the Plain of Jars, 100 miles northeast of Vientiane. Two weeks later, on April 7, Laotian troops entered Xiangkhoang virtually unopposed. With Laotian positions temporarily safe, the USAF AC—47s returned to South Vietnam on June 9.

American involvement in Southeast Asia expanded on March 18, 1969, when the United States began B—52 night attacks on Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia. About the same time, however, the U.S. began to reequip South Vietnam's forces in preparation for eventual withdrawal of all American forces. On April 19 the U.S. transferred to the VNAF its first jet aircraft. Shortly afterwards, on June 8, President Richard M. Nixon announced that during July and August 1969 the United States would withdraw 25,000 of its 540,000 troops in South Vietnam, even though no progress had been made in the Paris peace talks.

Vietnam Summer/Fall 1969: June 9—October 31, 1969

In the summer of 1969 Communist military action in South Vietnam temporarily decreased. On July 2, following the siege on Ben Het, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces withdrew into Laos. Defenders at Ben Het credited air power, especially B—52s that bombed concentrations of troops, with preventing the enemy from capturing the camp. On August 12, however, a new enemy offensive began; Communist forces attacked over 100 cities, towns, and military installations in South Vietnam with mortars, rockets, and, in a few cases, infantry. During the next month, between September 15 and October 20, the Seventh Air Force flew close air support against Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces that attempted unsuccessfully to take a camp near Duc Lap, about 160 miles northeast of Saigon and 3 miles east of the Cambodian border.

Meanwhile, South Vietnam intensified its pacification program, and the United States began withdrawing its military forces. The first U.S. troops left the country on July 8, 1969, and in August the USAF reduced the number of tactical air and B—52 sorties flown daily in South Vietnam. Two F—100 tactical fighter squadrons and a B—57 tactical bomber squadron left South Vietnam during October, and the United States transferred to the VNAF operation of the air base at Nha Trang, located on the coast about 200 miles northeast of Saigon.

During the summer and fall of 1969, on the Plain of Jars in Laos, the USAF provided close air support to Royal Laotian and irregular forces continuing to fight the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese. On June 24 the Communists attacked Muong Soui, a town 110 miles north of Vientiane and about 45 miles southeast of Luang Prabang. U.S. Army helicopters, protected by tactical aircraft, evacuated the Laotian troops from Muong Soui on June 27, and 4 days later Laotian government forces counterattacked with the aid of USAF close air support. The advance stalled on July 8, however, when the weather deteriorated and few tactical fighter sorties could be flown. When the weather improved in late August, the Laotians renewed their offensive, supported by 200 USAF tactical air sorties daily. On September 12 Laotian forces captured Xiangkhoang and on September 27 they re-entered Muong Soui.

In the panhandle of Laos, the USAF continued its interdiction campaign, COMMANDO HUNT II, concentrating on an area near the Ban Hieng River


CHINA
NORTH VIETNAM
Red River
Hanoi
Luang Prabang
Muong Soui
Plain of Jars
Xiangkhoang
Vientiane
LAOS
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
Mekong River
Tchepone
DMZ
Ben Hai River
JUNE 9 — OCTOBER 31, 1969
THAILAND
Ben Het
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Duc Lap
Nha Trang
Cam Ranh Bay
Phnom Penh
Saigon River
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
21°
18°
15°
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running from the DMZ in Vietnam southwest about 25 miles to Tchepone, Laos, 400 miles north of Saigon. The North Vietnamese used the river and its tributaries to transport supplies from the demilitarized zone into Laos. Strong antiaircraft batteries along the river protected storage and transshipment points, petroleum pipelines, and roads used to move supplies, personnel, and equipment into South Vietnam. The USAF flew tactical air and B—52 missions against this network during the day and gunship missions at night to destroy much of the materiel the enemy attempted to move.


CHINA
NORTH VIETNAM
Red River
Hanoi
Muong Soui
Plain of Jars
Long Tieng
Vientiane
LAOS
Udorn AB
Mekong River
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
HO CHI MINH TRAIL
DMZ
NOVEMBER 1, 1969 — APRIL 30, 1970
THAILAND
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Phu Cat
Cam Ranh Bay
Phnom Penh
Saigon River
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
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18°
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12°
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102°
105°
108°
111°

Vietnam Winter/Spring 1970: November 1, 1969—April 30, 1970

While Viet Cong and North Vietnamese military activity in South Vietnam continued at a low level and U.S. forces gradually withdrew, the Republic of Vietnam re-equipped and modernized its armed forces in a program called "Vietnamization." To meet the VNAF's needs for trained personnel, the USAF in the fall of 1969 began training programs both in South Vietnam and the United States. On December 1, 1969, the AC–47 gunships flew their last combat missions as U.S. aircraft; subsequently, the United States transferred the AC–47s to the VNAF and the Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF). A few weeks later, on January 22, 1970, the U.S. Air Force began transferring to the VNAF the Tactical Air Control System that handled air defense, tactical attacks, and air traffic control in South Vietnam. On March 15 the USAF inactivated the 37th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phu Cat, an air base on the coast 250 miles northeast of Saigon, and the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing at Cam Ranh Bay, 180 miles northeast of Saigon. The USAF began withdrawing civil engineering units in April.

The USAF might reduce its forces and operations in South Vietnam, but other events prompted increased U.S. involvement in Laos. On November 1, 1969, with the onset of another dry season, the USAF began another intensive air campaign, COMMANDO HUNT III, in the Laotian panhandle to counter an increasing flow southwards of enemy troops and supplies. The 14th Special Operations Wing's AC–119 and AC–130 gunships, although only flying a small number of the total sorties along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, accounted for almost half of the destroyed or damaged trucks. Meanwhile, tactical air and B—52 aircrews focused on area targets and antiaircraft positions.

While the USAF effort in the Laotian panhandle focused on interdiction, aerial action in northern Laos involved close air support. In January 1970 the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese mounted a major offensive against Royal Laotian forces. On January 4 the Seventh Air Force sent a helicopter squadron to Long Tieng, an airstrip 100 miles north of Vientiane, for operations around Muong Soui. It also dispatched AC–119K gunships to Udorn Air Base, Thailand, on February 15 to provide armed reconnaissance along major roads in northern Laos and close air support for Laotian forward bases. Two days later, in an effort to slow the enemy advance, the USAF used B–52s against North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao positions in northern Laos. Despite the intense air attacks, the Communist forces captured Muong Soui on February 24

and, advancing over the Plain of Jars, by March 17 threatened Long Tieng. The Seventh Air Force helped fly in reinforcements of Thai and Laotian troops to Long Tieng and evacuated refugees, while its tactical aircraft provided close air support to the beleaguered troops. By March 30 the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces once again had retreated, and Long Tieng appeared safe, at least until the next dry season.

The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong for many years had used Cambodia as a sanctuary with relative impunity, although the USAF as early as March 1969 bombed targets in Cambodia with B-52s. Then, in March 1970, a new Cambodian government challenged the Communist military presence. The Communists reacted with a military campaign against Cambodian forces. As the conflict escalated, on April 20 Cambodian Premier Lon Nol formally sought U.S. aid. On the 24th the USAF began flying tactical missions against enemy targets in Cambodia, and 5 days later, the ARVN entered Cambodia to destroy enemy bases and supplies and assist Cambodian troops fighting the Communists.

Sanctuary Counteroffensive: May 1—June 30, 1970

The U.S. Army 1st Cavalry Division, supported by USAF airlift and tactical air forces, on May 1, 1970, swept into the Parrot's Beak, the Cambodian salient west of Saigon. On May 6 U.S. troops also moved into the so-called Fishhook area of the Cambodian border, near the town of Phuoc Binh, about 75 miles north of Saigon.

During the incursion, the 834th Air Division delivered supplies initially at Katum, some 55 miles northwest of Saigon, at Loc Ninh, about 65 miles northwest of Saigon, and later at Bu Dop, 80 miles north of Saigon. When other landing sites were unavailable, the airlifters used Song Be, an all-weather strip 15 miles east of the border, on the outskirts of Phuoc Binh. USAF C–130 and C–7 transports also flew cargo and troops to the northern front, landing primarily at Plei Djereng, 10 miles from the border and about 15 miles west of Pleiku, a provincial capital 215 miles northeast of Saigon. From June 23 to 25, USAF C–123s evacuated civilian refugees from the Cambodian towns of Ba Kev, about 45 miles southwest of Pleiku, and Buong Long, 14 miles further west. The 834th Air Division, from May 1 to June 30, delivered 75,000 people and 49,600 tons of cargo to forward areas in support of the Cambodian Sanctuary Counteroffensive.

Meanwhile, Seventh Air Force provided close air support and flew river and road convoy escort to permit the reinforcement of troops in the field and the movement of supplies to the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh. B–52s bombed enemy base sites and troop concentrations beyond the 18-mile limit inside the Cambodian border that restricted the deployment of ground forces and tactical aircraft. By June 30, 1970, B–52s had flown 763 sorties against enemy targets in Cambodia. During the Cambodian incursion, the Allies surprised the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces and destroyed or captured significant quantities of weapons, vehicles, and other supplies. Air power helped ensure the success of the campaign, and the USAF continued to fly missions over Cambodia after Allied ground forces withdrew on June 29, 1970.

Shortly after the Cambodian counteroffensive began, Communist forces sharply increased their attacks in South Vietnam. On May 8, 1970, the Viet Cong shelled 64 bases and towns, and North Vietnamese troops attacked several ARVN camps near the DMZ. The battle in Cambodia also spread into Laos, and on May 13 Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese troops attacked Royal Laotian forces on the Bolovens Plateau. On June


CHINA
NORTH VIETNAM
Red River
Hanoi
Barthelemy Pass
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
Vientiane
LAOS
Mekong River
Dong Hoi
Ban Karai Pass
DMZ
MAY 1 — JUNE 30, 1970
Saravane
Da Nang
Bolovens Plateau
THAILAND
Plei Djereng
Pleiku
Ba Kev
Bangkok
Boung Long
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Bu Dop
Loc Ninh
Phuoc Binh
Phnom Penh
Katum
Parrot's Beak
Saigon River
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
21°
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105°
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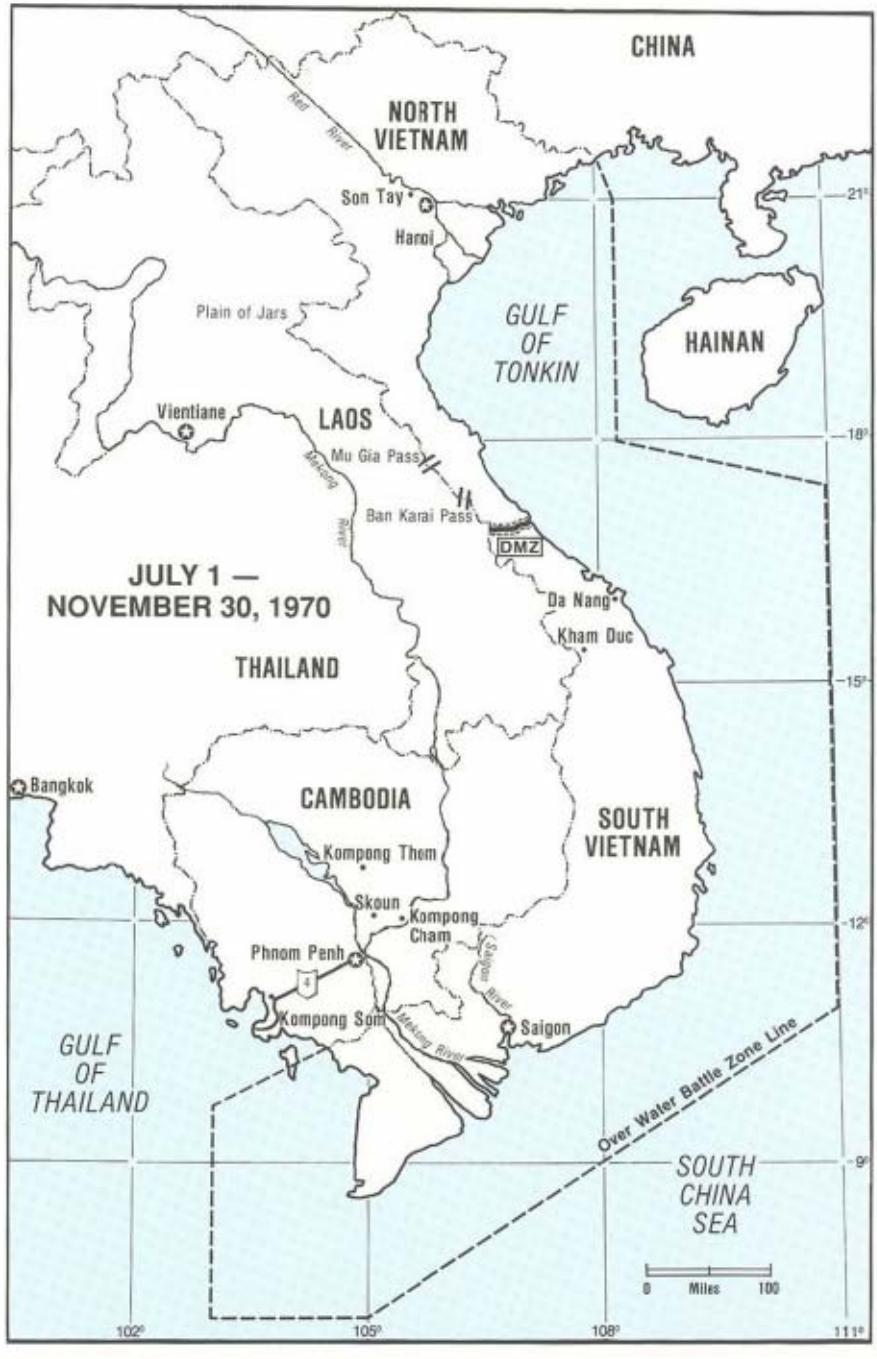
9 the enemy captured the provincial capital of Saravane, in the Laotian panhandle, but withdrew 3 days later. Despite increasingly effective enemy antiaircraft fire, the USAF continued interdiction missions in southern Laos.

Although the United States had limited its flying activities over North Vietnam to reconnaissance after the bombing cessation of 1968, these missions resumed in 1970. Between May I and 4 almost 500 U.S. tactical aircraft attacked missile sites, antiaircraft guns, and logistics facilities near Barthelemy and Ban Karai Passes and Dong Hoi, a sea-coast town about 40 miles north of the DMZ.* In Paris, meanwhile, the peace talks continued intermittently; Communist delegates frequently boycotted sessions on various pretexts. For example, the Communists boycotted the session on May 6, 1970, protesting the renewed bombing of North Vietnam.

*These were the first aerial attacks against North Vietnam since the November 1968 bombing halt. The United States conducted such raids occasionally until, in April 1972, it resumed sustained and intensive bombing of North Vietnam.


CHINA
NORTH VIETNAM
Red River
Son Tay
Hanoi
Plain of Jars
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
Vientiane
LAOS
Mu Gia Pass
Mekong River
Ban Karai Pass
DMZ
JULY 1 — NOVEMBER 30, 1970
Da Nang
Kham Duc
THAILAND
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Kompong Thom
Skoun
Kompong Cham
Saigon River
Phnom Penh
4
Kompong Som
Mekong River
Saigon
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
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Southwest Monsoon: July 1—November 30, 1970

Throughout the summer and fall of 1970, USAF aircraft flew interdiction and close air support missions in Cambodia to help ensure that the major towns and cities stayed in friendly hands. Gunships proved especially effective in defending Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital; the town of Kompong Chom, 50 miles to the northeast; and Kompong Thom, about 65 miles north of the capital. On August 8 Cambodian troops, backed by USAF close air support, drove North Vietnamese forces from Skoun, an important highway junction between Kompong Thom and Phnom Penh. Despite these efforts, Communist forces controlled about half of Cambodia by November and kept the highway closed between Phnom Penh and the seaport of Kompong Som, 100 miles to the southwest. The Cambodians had to resupply Phnom Penh and their troops by transporting goods up the Mekong River, and Allied aircraft escorted the river convoys to protect the ships from attack.

The chaotic military situation in Cambodia during 1970 closely resembled the one to the north in Laos. With the coming of another wet season, Laotian forces began 2 new offensives in an effort to wrest control of the Plain of Jars from the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese. The first offensive occurred between August 2 and 23 and the second from August 31 to October 23. The Communist forces retreated slowly to the southeast rim of the plain, inflicting heavy losses on the Royal and irregular Laotian forces. During the Laotian offensives, the USAF provided close air support and continued to attack supply routes in both the northern and southern parts of the country.

In South Vietnam, the withdrawal of U.S. forces gained momentum. The USAF redeployed the 31st Tactical Fighter Wing to the United States in September 1970 and inactivated or redeployed several of its A–1, A–37, and F–105 squadrons. Meanwhile, on September 1, Gen. Lucius D. Clay, Jr., assumed command of the Seventh Air Force. Six weeks later, on October 12, President Richard M. Nixon announced that the U.S. would withdraw 40,000 more troops from South Vietnam by December 1, 1970, leaving about 335,000 military personnel in the country. Subsequently, in November, the USAF redeployed 2 tactical reconnaissance squadrons from South Vietnam to the United States.

Whatever the rate of U.S. disengagement, intense fighting continued. The Allies mounted a heliborne, multi-brigade operation between July 12 and August 26 to disrupt Communist transportation networks in the

mountainous border area near the Kham Duc airstrip, only 55 miles southwest of Da Nang. Allied ground forces received extensive close air and airlift support from the Seventh Air Force, but reported few contacts with the enemy.

Later in the year, on November 21, the USAF and the U.S. Army attempted to rescue U.S. prisoners of war believed held at Son Tay, a prison camp 20 miles northwest of Hanoi. Two C–130s led a rescue force of helicopters and A–1 aircraft from bases in Thailand to Son Tay, while F–105Fs suppressed North Vietnamese surface-to-air missiles. The C–130s illuminated the prison compound and marked targets for the A-is' suppressive fire while 1 helicopter crash landed in the compound and the rest landed outside. The raiders found no POWs and withdrew without loss of personnel, although the helicopter in the compound was blown up and 1 F–105F was destroyed by enemy fire.

A few hours after the Son Tay raid, some 200 U.S. tactical aircraft, supported by 50 other airplanes, bombed SAM sites, antiaircraft gunsites, and supply and transport facilities in North Vietnam near the Mu Gia and the Ban Karai Passes, and in the DMZ. Within a few days, on November 25, 1970, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong delegation again boycotted the Paris peace negotiations.

COMMANDO HUNT V: December 1, 1970—May 14, 1971

On December 1, 1970, the USAF began another interdiction campaign named COMMANDO HUNT V, the third so-named dry season campaign in as many years.* n Commando Hunt V, the USAF attacks focused on the Laotian panhandle, although tactical aircraft periodically struck
targets in northern Laos and Cambodia. B—52s and fighter-bombers hit the passes between North Vietnam and Laos, creating chokepoints that forced the North Vietnamese to channel traffic and reinforcements moving southward so that gunships, B—57G bombers, and other tactical aircraft could more easily destroy them. The IGLOO WHITE automated system of sensors that the USAF airdropped along the Ho Chi Minh Trail was designed to aid in the location of trucks and other moving targets.

The South Vietnamese and U.S. military leaders intended this aerial campaign to prevent a sustained enemy offensive in South Vietnam, thus giving the Republic of Vietnam more time to equip with modern weapons and train its armed forces. To that end, between January 30 and March 24, 1971, the ARVN entered Laos near Khe Sanh, 15 miles south of the DMZ. The Allies in this operation, code-named LAM SON 719, hoped to cut a segment of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and capture Tchepone, the hub of the Communists' logistics system in Laos. From February 8 to March 24 the USAF supported Lam Son 719 by airlifting South Vietnamese troops and supplies into Khe Sanh, flying tactical air strikes in Laos, and furnishing forward air control (FAC) in the battle area.

On March 7, 1971, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam reached Tchepone; however, North Vietnamese forces inflicted such heavy casualties that South Vietnamese commanders were forced to withdraw 3 days later. The USAF then covered U.S. Army helicopters evacuating ARVN troops with heavy tactical air and B—52 attacks. By March 24 the last ARVN troops returned to South Vietnam, but they had abandoned large quantities of military hardware, including trucks and tanks, during the evacuation. n spite of the ARVN's chaotic withdrawal, the North Vietnamese army also suffered heavy losses and did not begin another major offensive in South Vietnam for almost a year.

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*COMMANDO) HUNT I and lII were the previous dry season (October—May) interdiction campaigns. COMMANDO HUNT II and IV applied to operations during the rainy seasons (June—September).


CHINA
Red River
NORTH VIETNAM
Hanoi
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
LAOS
Vientiane
Mu Gia Pass
Mekong River
Ban Karai Pass
DMZ
Tchepone
Khe Sanh
Lan Son 719 Area
DECEMBER 1, 1970 — MAY 14, 1971
THAILAND
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Phnom Penh
L. Saigon River
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
21°
18°
15°
12°
9°
102°
105°
108°
111°

The COMMANDO HUNT V campaign saw the first extensive use of 2 new USAF weapons: laser-guided bombs and "daisy cutter" bombs. On February 3, 1971, F–4s equipped with laser-seeker pods and laser-guided bombs destroyed a 37-mm antiaircraft site along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Then, on February 19, F—4 pilots used this weapon to destroy 2 trucks. On March 3 the Seventh Air Force used laser-guided bombs to destroy tanks that had been spotted near Tchepone. The USAF now had the means to hit accurately small targets on the first try. During LAM SON 719, the USAF also used large, high-explosive "daisy cutter" bombs (up to 15,000 pounds) to clear landing zones for helicopters. These bombs, extracted by parachute from C—130s, exploded a few feet above the ground and cleared enough area in the jungle for 1 or 2 helicopters to land. The ordnance allowed engineers to establish suitable landing zones quickly in enemy territory and contributed substantially to the rapid movement of troops into and out of Laos.

All the while, the war raged in other regions of Southeast Asia. From January through April 1971, the USAF launched numerous retaliatory strikes against surface-to-air missile and antiaircraft sites in North Vietnam, and USAF pilots also frequently flew close air support missions in Cambodia and northern Laos. Meantime, on February 18 the North Vietnamese delegation once again boycotted the Paris peace talks, although on April 8 it reappeared to resume negotiations.


CHINA
NORTH VIETNAM
Red River
Hanoi
Plain of Jars
Muong Soui
Vientiane
LAOS
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
Mekong River
Dong Hoi
HO CHI MINH
DMZ
MAY 15 — OCTOBER 31, 1971
THAILAND
Saravane
Bolovens Plateau
Pakse
Pak Song
Attopeu
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Phnom Penh
Krek
Tay Ninh
Saigon
Bien Hoa AB
Phan Rang AB
Tan Son Nhut AB
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
21°
18°
15°
12°
9°
102°
105°
108°
111°

COMMANDO HUNT VI:
May 15—October 31, 1971

During the wet season from May to October 1971, when bad weather restricted air attacks along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos, North Vietnamese troops lengthened and improved roads and added to their air defenses. For the first time, they installed surface-to-air missile sites in Laos. Meanwhile, the USAF flew as many interdiction missions in the Laotian panhandle as weather permitted.

Allied pilots also supported Royal Laotian forces struggling to hold the Bolovens Plateau, an area in the panhandle encompassing the towns of Saravane, 315 miles southeast of Vientiane; Pakse, 60 miles southwest of Saravane; and Attopeu, about 65 miles southeast of Saravane. On May 17, 1971, the North Vietnamese took the last Laotian positions on the Bolovens Plateau; Royal Laotian forces subsequently began an offensive to recapture the area. On July 28 they recaptured Saravane and began an advance on Pak Song, a hamlet some 30 miles east of Pakse and 35 miles south of Saravane. The Laotians recaptured Pak Song on September 14. The royal forces were successful despite the fact that poor weather and lack of coordination between the Laotian government and the Seventh Air Force combined to limit the U.S. role to occasional close air support and the airlift of some troops and supplies.

In northern Laos the Seventh Air Force also aided Royal and irregular Laotian troops which recaptured most of the Plain of Jars during the summer of 1971. Unfortunately, the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese remained entrenched on the northern and eastern rims. On September 26 the Laotians recaptured their former base at Muong Soui. Then, in mid-September, as the roads dried, the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese began moving men and supplies from North Vietnam into northern Laos preparatory to a new offensive. To counter this threat, USAF tactical aircraft flew interdiction and close air support missions during the day, and at night AC–130 and AC–119 gunships flew armed reconnaissance and close air support missions for the Laotian government and irregular forces.

Throughout the fall of 1971 the USAF also conducted periodic raids on North Vietnam. For example, on September 21 almost 200 fighter-bombers, escorted by 50 other aircraft, dropped bombs on petroleum and logistical storage areas and military barracks near Dong Hoi. The bombers, using all-weather tactics and equipment, achieved excellent results despite the poor weather. The all-weather tactics, based on the

use of advanced electronic equipment for navigation and target selection, would serve the USAF well in subsequent missions against North Vietnam.

In Cambodia the USAF flew frequent interdiction missions and occasional close air support missions. On June 2, 1971, U.S. bombers and helicopters struck Communist troop concentrations to forestall an imminent invasion of South Vietnam. The ARVN reentered Cambodia on September 20, as it had done a number of times since June 1970. This time the troops cleared the road between Tay Ninh, South Vietnam, 50 miles northwest of Saigon, and Krek, Cambodia, about 30 miles northwest of Tay Ninh and 70 miles east of Phnom Penh, capital of Cambodia. The USAF supported this operation with tactical air strikes and B–52 missions.

During COMMANDO HUNT VI, U.S. forces continued to withdraw from South Vietnam. On July 12, 1971, the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing inactivated at Phan Rang Air Base, on the coast 160 miles northeast of Saigon. The Seventh Air Force received a new Commander, Gen. John D. Lavelle, on August 1. The 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing inactivated at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon on the last day of the month. Shortly afterwards the USAF transferred operation of Bien Hoa Air Base to the Vietnamese Air Force, and on September 20 the 14th Special Operations Wing inactivated at Phan Rang. The VNAF, mean-time, activated several squadrons to operate aircraft received from the USAF, such as the AC–119 gunship, and to perform new functions, such as airlifting fuel from 1 locale to another. By October 31, 1971, less than 200,000 U.S. troops remained in South Vietnam.

COMMANDO HUNT VII: November 1, 1971—March 29, 1972

With the onset of the dry season, the USAF began another air interdiction campaign on November 1, 1971. COMMANDO HUNT VII was primarily directed against enemy traffic over the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos, although USAF pilots also flew missions in South Vietnam and Cambodia. The campaign consisted of 3 phases. First, U.S. pilots bombed the Mu Gia and Ban Karai Passes, entry points from North Vietnam into Laos. In phase 2, tactical aircraft attacked chokepoints on key transportation routes, bombing or strafing stalled trucks and full storage sites. Phase 3 began in early 1972, when the Air Force shifted air strikes, including B–52 bombing, to entry points between Laos and South Vietnam. During the 5-month interdiction campaign, B–52s and AC–130s hit enemy traffic at night, while during the day tactical fighters bombed and strafed trucks and other targets of opportunity. From November 1971 through March 1972, U.S. aircraft damaged or destroyed an estimated 10,000 trucks in the Laotian panhandle and about 1,500 more in northeastern Laos.

Besides the interdiction missions along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, USAF pilots flew close air support sorties for Laotian forces now under increasing pressure from the enemy on the Bolovens Plateau and the Plain of Jars. On November 25 Royal Laotian troops held most of the Bolovens Plateau, but within 2 weeks, on December 6, the North Vietnamese once again drove the Laotian forces from Saravane, on the northern edge of the plateau. On January 3, 1972, Pak Song, a town 35 miles south of Saravane, fell to advancing Communist troops, and by January 11 the Bolovens Plateau was in the hands of the Communists. n northern Laos, on December 18, 1971, the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces mounted a major offensive on the Plain of Jars and on January 31, 1972, cut the highway between the capital, Vientiane, and the old Royal city of Luang Prabang.

By this time, interdiction and close air support missions in Laos had become much more dangerous because of greatly improved air defenses. For example, on March 29, 1972, the U.S. Air Force lost an AC–130 ten miles southwest of Tchepone to a surface-to-air missile. On May 5, when the Communists first introduced the shoulder-fired infrared heat-seeking missile, the SA–7 Strela, 1 of the missiles damaged an AC–130 near An Loc, South Vietnam, about 55 miles northwest of Saigon.


CHINA
NORTH VIETNAM
Red River
Haiphong
Hanoi
Luang Prabang
Plain of Jars
Quang Lang
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
Vientiane
LAOS
Vinh
Mu Gia Pass
Dong Hoi
Mekong River
Ban Karai Pass
HO CHI MINH TRAIL
DMZ
Tchepone
NOVEMBER 1, 1971 — MARCH 29, 1972
Da Nang
Saravane
Bolovens Plateau
THAILAND
Pak Song
Phu Cat AB
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
An Loc
Cam Ranh Bay
Phan Rang AB
Phnom Penh
Saigon River
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
21°
18°
15°
12°
9°
102°
105°
108°
111°

During COMMANDO HUNT VII, the USAF mounted several air raids against targets in North Vietnam in retaliation for enemy fire on reconnaissance aircraft. On November 7 and 8, 1971, U.S. aircraft bombed 3 airfields—at Doug Hoi, on the coast 35 miles north of the DMZ; at Vinh, 90 miles further up the coast and about 160 miles south of Hanoi; and at Quan Lang, on the 20th parallel near the Laotian border and less than 100 miles southwest of Hanoi. From December 26 to 30 the United States conducted the heaviest air attacks on North Vietnam since October 1968, flying 1,025 sorties against military installations south of the 20th parallel.

In spite of the escalating air and ground war, the U.S. continued to withdraw its forces from Southeast Asia. On November 17, 1971, the USAF inactivated the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing and on December 1 the 834th Air Division, at Phu Cat Air Base. Later that month, the USAF transferred base operations at Phu Cat to the VNAF. By the end of December only 158,000 U.S. troops of all services remained in South Vietnam. The withdrawal of American forces continued, although no progress had as yet been secured in the Paris peace talks. Indeed, in February and March 1972 Communist delegates again boycotted the sessions for 4 weeks. n March the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing inactivated at Phan Rang Air Base, and the 504th Tactical Air Support Group inactivated at Cam Ranh Bay. While the USAF inactivated or redeployed units, reduced its manpower, and gave up various functions, South Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian pilots increasingly flew interdiction and close air support sorties, as well as airlift and other support missions.


CHINA
NORTH VIETNAM
Red River
Haiphong
Hanoi
20th Parallel
Thanh Hoa
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
LAOS
Vientiane
Vinh
Mekong River
DMZ
Quang Tri
Hue
MARCH 30, 1972—
JANUARY 28, 1973
THAILAND
Bolovens Plateau
Kontum
Qui Nhon
Pleiku
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Loc Ninh
An Loc
Phnom Penh
Saigon River
Saigon
Mekong River
GULF OF THAILAND
Over Water Battle Zone Line
SOUTH CHINA SEA
0 Miles 100
102°
105°
108°
111°
21°
18°
15°
12°
9°

Vietnam Ceasefire:
March 30, 1972—January 28, 1973

On March 30, 1972, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong opened a 3-pronged offensive, with the intention of defeating the Republic of Vietnam and reuniting Vietnam under a Communist regime. In a conventional attack supported with artillery and tanks, the North Vietnamese crossed the DMZ into Quang Tri Province, occupying Quang Tri, the provincial capital, on May 1 and attacking Hue. In a second thrust, the Communists invaded the Central Highlands from Laos, isolating Kontum and cutting the highway between Pleiku and Qui Nhon. On April 5 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces crossed the border from Cambodia in the third phase of the offensive, capturing Loc Ninh on April 6 and besieging An Loc. By May 8, however, the enemy offensive had stalled; on June 10 the Communists withdrew from Kontum and on the 26th from An Loc. Two days later the North Vietnamese retreated from Quang Tri, and on June 30 the South Vietnamese reopened the road to Pleiku.

U.S. air power contributed significantly to the battle. Although the USAF had reduced its forces in Southeast Asia to half of those present in mid-1968, it moved quickly to augment them. U.S. Navy, Marine, and Army aviation elements joined the USAF to provide airlift, interdiction, tactical reconnaissance, and close air support for the South Vietnamese.

A week after the Communist offensive began, on April 6, the United States resumed systematic, sustained bombing of military and industrial targets in North Vietnam as far north as the 20th parallel. The next day Gen. John W. Vogt, Jr., USAF, became the Seventh Air Force Commander. On May 4 South Vietnamese and U.S. leaders suspended peace negotiations in Paris, and 4 days later, the United States imposed a naval blockade of North Vietnam, mining harbors at Haiphong, Vinh, and elsewhere along the coast. The United States also initiated LINEBACKER on May 8—1 of the largest air campaigns of the war. Targets included the rebuilt Paul Doumer Bridge in Hanoi, the Thanh Hoa Bridge, rail lines, a petroleum pipeline from China to Hanoi, power plants, marshaling yards, and other strategic and tactical objectives throughout North Vietnam. During Linebacker, on June 28, Gen. Frederick C. Weyand, USA, became the Commander of MACV.

Peace negotiations, suspended for ten weeks, resumed in Paris on July 13. Anticipating a successful conclusion to the renewed peace talks, the United States halted the bombing of North Vietnam above the 20th

parallel as of October 23. But when negotiations stalled, the United States conducted an intensive aerial offensive, LINEBACKER II, from December 18 to 30, against North Vietnam. B—52s and USAF and Navy tactical aircraft bombed Hanoi and Haiphong and their environs around the clock, concentrating on such targets as railyards, power plants, communication facilities, air defense radars, SAM and antiaircraft gun sites, petroleum tank farms, shipping facilities, ammunition dumps, and MiG bases. On December 30, after peace talks resumed, the United States again ceased bombing north of the 20th parallel.

On January 23, 1973, North Vietnam and the United States agreed to a cease-fire, effective within 5 days. Part of the agreement called for the North Vietnamese to release prisoners of war while the United States withdrew completely from South Vietnam. From February 12 to March 29, following the Vietnam Ceasefire, North Vietnam released 565 American POWs. In OPERATION HOMECOMING, the 9th Aeromedical Evacuation Group flew the POWs from Hanoi to Clark Air Base in the Philippines.

After the Vietnam Ceasefire Campaign, the Royal Laotian government signed a cease-fire agreement with the Pathet Lao on February 21, 1973. USAF B-52s, nevertheless, flew missions against Communist forces in Cambodia until August 15, 1973, when the U.S. Congress mandated an end to U.S. bombing in Southeast Asia.

The fighting had ended for American forces, but the Communists, resupplied and reequipped, soon escalated the ground war throughout Southeast Asia. Within 2 years, on April 17, 1.975, the Khmer Rouge occupied all of Cambodia. On April 30 North Vietnam conquered South Vietnam and unified the country. And on December 3, 1975, the Pathet Lao seized power in Laos, marking an end to an era of U.S. influence in Southeast Asia.