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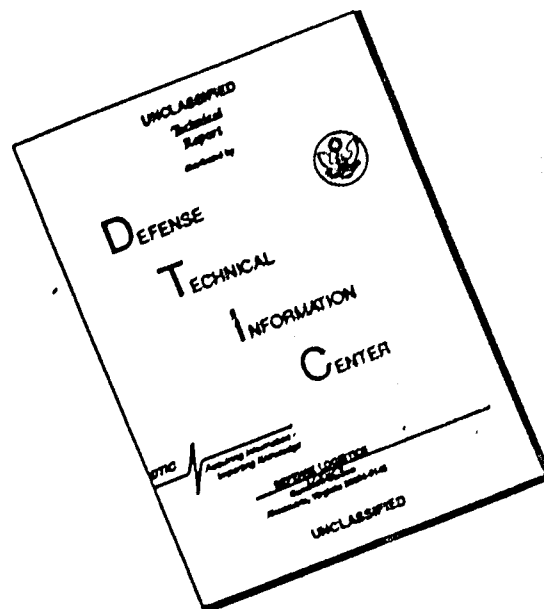
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HQDA Ltr 525-73-3

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

DAAG-PAP-A (M) (23 Apr 73) DAMO-ODU

9 May 1973

Expires 9 May 1974

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report: Major General Marshall B. Garth,  
Commander, Third Regional Assistance Command, 4 October 72 -  
28 March 73 (U)

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2. Transmitted herewith is the report of Major General Marshall B. Garth,  
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3. This report is provided to insure appropriate benefits are realized  
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**DEBRIEFING REPORT**

**MAJOR GENERAL MARSHALL B. GARTH**

**COMMANDING GENERAL**

**THIRD REGIONAL ASSISTANCE COMMAND**

**4 October 1972 - 28 March 1973**

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#### INCLOSURES

- 1 - MAP: Friendly Situation as of 4 October 1973
- 2 - MAP: Enemy Disposition as of 4 October 1973
- 3 - MAP: Friendly Situation as of 25 November 1972
- 4 - MAP: Enemy Dispositions as of 28 January 1973

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### 1. (C) INTRODUCTION:

This report is submitted as required by AR 525-14. It contains observations and comments derived from my assignment as Commander, Third Regional Assistance Command and Senior Advisor to III Corps, and Military Region 3, South Vietnam, from 4 October 1972 until the inactivation of the Third Regional Assistance Command on 28 March 1973.

### 2. (C) GENERAL:

This unique period in the history of TRAC encompassed the full panoply of military-political operations. It began with a fairly high level of enemy-initiated military operations in anticipation of the late October truce which never developed; continued through a sensitive period of pre-truce fits and starts; and culminated in efforts to implement the peace treaty signed in Paris 27 January 1973, with the attendant withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam. By any reasonable standards I can say that US efforts to build an effective Vietnamese military force in MR3 paid off over the short term, as the ARVN and territorial forces thwarted a last minute enemy attempt to expand his control prior to the cease fire. ARVN III Corps is as good today as any American equivalent that I have ever observed. The weak link in the Vietnamese military establishment--and it may be crucial or ultimately inconsequential depending upon their ability for self analysis followed by a highly disciplined effort for change--is their reluctance to pay adequate attention across the full spectrum of personnel management problems. In a closely allied problem area, RVNAF has institutionalized internal parochialism by highlighting differences between arms and services instead of demanding continuous mutual support and cooperation. The solution to these problems, as with so many other facets of management within the oriental perspective, depends so heavily on the personality of the top GVN leadership that prognosis is uncertain. What is certain is that the technical and operational skills are present within the Vietnamese military establishment to accomplish anything that the leadership sets its mind to do. While our advisory effort has left a legacy of good will toward the United States and, I believe, a special bond between the US and the Vietnamese military, our considerable day-to-day influence in MR3 was a transitory thing. The will and the guidance to continue the Vietnamese struggle for independence is drawn from a higher order of things than the US military in MR3 can provide. TRAC's efforts in the latter period of my tenure were focused on the orderly drawdown of US forces and the support of the Joint Military Commission and the International Commission of

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Control and Supervision as created in MR3 by the Paris Agreement. Efforts of individual officers on my staff were enthusiastic and often ingenious, but as of this writing the success of the peace-keeping mechanisms is seriously in doubt.

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### 3. OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE:

a. General: This unique period was dominated by village/hamlet occupation, lines of communication interdiction, and land grab attempts in connection with an anticipated cease fire in late October and again just prior to the actual cease fire on 28 January 1973. From early October through the expected cease fire on 31 October the enemy executed an offensive employing all available main force and local force units to seize population centers in MR3, with his major effort in southern Binh Duong, Hau Nghia, Bien Hoa, western Long Khanh, and Phuoc Tuy Provinces. This premature commitment of his forces was very costly to the North Vietnamese units and severely damaged the Viet Cong elements. In late December and early January, as the possibility of a cease fire again appeared imminent, III Corps conducted an offensive into the Saigon River Corridor with excellent results. With the actual signing of the cease fire agreement on 28 January the enemy again attempted a land grab offensive with his main effort in Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, Bien Hoa, Long Khanh, Phuoc Tuy and Binh Tuy Provinces. Weakened by their October attempt and the Saigon River Corridor Operation, the attempt to seize new areas was totally defeated within a period of a few days. Thereafter, TRAC's efforts were devoted to support of facilities, communication and transportation requirements for the Four Party Joint Military Commission and the International Commission for Control and Supervision of Region V, and continuance of an effective liaison with the ARVN in an attempt to bring about a true cease fire between the GVN and the enemy elements in MR3. Concerted efforts to deploy Four Party Joint Military Commission elements in their planned field locations were hampered by apparent stalling and lack of cooperation by the other three parties (Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Provisional Revolutionary Government, and Government of Vietnam). Throughout my tenure as Commander, Third Regional Assistance Command, the imminence of a cease fire has dominated the operations of the ARVN and the enemy as well, and dictated much of the planning and over all effort of my staff and advisory elements.

b. Situation Upon my Arrival: On 4 October 1972, the disposition of friendly forces in Military Region 3 was as shown on the map at Incl 1. This positioning of units continued to reflect III Corps' reaction to the enemy's spring-summer offensive and the subsequent attempt to open QL13 as a resupply route to An Loc. The entire 18th Division was securing the An Loc area, and the 5th Division was operating in its traditional area around Lai Khe. The 25th Division (-), which had previously attempted to open QL13 from Chon Thanh to An Loc, had recently been moved to Phu

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Loi and was operating north of its new base. A Corps Mobile Task Force consisting of the 49th Regiment, 25th Division; 6th Ranger Group; and five armored cavalry troops was based at Cu Chi with responsibility for securing the western part of the military region, and the 3d Ranger Group was securing QL1 in Bien Hoa Province. On the enemy side, major combat units had also remained generally in a tactical configuration similar to that of their spring-summer campaign. The 9th NVA Division's regiments remained in a defensive posture in northern Binh Long Province. The 7th NVA Division's subordinate regiments, along with the attached 205th NVA Regiment and two battalions of the 429th Sapper Group had been applying pressure along QL13 between Lai Khe and Chon Thanh, while at the same time blocking the highway between Chon Thanh and An Loc. The 101st NVA Regiment had remained for the most part out of contact in its traditional base area south of the Michelin Plantation. The 33d NVA Regiment remained north of QL1 near Trang Bom in eastern Bien Hoa Province, where it had been since mid-August, and the 274th NVA Regiment was deployed in its normal operational area of southeastern Bien Hoa and northwestern Phuoc Tuy Provinces. The 271st Independent Regiment was located near the mouth of the An Ninh infiltration corridor in the Angel's Wing area of Cambodia, where it remained until early November prior to its incursion into western Hau Nghia Province. During August and September the enemy had been conducting economy of force operations to hold major ARVN units in place, while concurrently resting, refitting, and bringing replacements to his own units. This tactic allowed his forces to generate sufficient combat capability to launch a high-point offensive by the beginning of October. As of my arrival on 4 October, the enemy was completing the deployment of his forces in preparation for the October highpoint, and the disposition of his major units was as shown on the map at Incl 2.

c. October Highpoint: Spearheaded by elements of the 7th NVA Division, the enemy initiated an offensive on 5 October to seize terrain and control population in central and southern Binh Duong, northeastern Hau Nghia, and eastern Bien Hoa Provinces. The 7th Division's 141st and 165th Regiments attacked hamlets in central Binh Duong Province east of QL13, while the 205th and 209th Regiments pushed through the Iron Triangle towards Phu Hoa Dong and Phu Cuong. Activity in Bien Hoa Province saw the 33d NVA Regiment pressuring QL1 east of Trang Bom, while in Hau Nghia Province the 101st NVA Regiment cut QL1 in the vicinity of Trang Bang. The deepest penetration toward the capital during the October offensive was made in southern-most Lai Thieu District of Binh Duong Province by the K-1 and K-2 Dong Nai Battalions. A more significant penetration, however, was made by the 209th Regiment along QL1 in the vicinity of Tan Phu Trung

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(XT6809). GVN operations were aimed at blocking enemy penetrations and evicting enemy forces from contested hamlets. The 25th Division conducted clearing operations in its AO north of Phu Loi, while the 5th Division operated along QL13 from Ben Cat to Chon Thanh and east along TL 2A. The Mobile Task Force countered enemy attacks along QL1 in northern Hau Nghia Province, and the 3d Ranger Group secured the Trang Bom area in eastern Bien Hoa Province. When the Phu Hoa Dong - Tan Phu Trung area was identified as a particularly persistent pocket of enemy resistance, the 81st Airborne Rangers were committed to reinforce friendly forces. Activity peaked on 28 October, as the number of enemy initiated incidents that day paralleled TET 1968 levels. The enemy forces were able to contest 96 separate population centers between 5 and 28 October. The October offensive, directed by COSVN through its Thu Bien Sub-Region Headquarters proved to be badly timed as it was based on the unilateral declaration of a cease fire at 1200 hours on 28 October and on the expected implementation of an agreement on 31 October. When the cease fire failed to materialize, enemy forces were left in an exposed position and vulnerable to GVN counter-attacks. As a result, the enemy suffered over 3000 casualties during the period, with the 205th and 209th Regiments sustaining the heaviest losses. Friendly losses for the period were 531 KIA, 2128 WIA, and 47 MIA. Especially significant aspects of friendly operations were packages of B-52 strikes northwest of Phu Hoa Dong which inflicted heavy losses on the 205th and 209th Regiments, and the professionalism displayed by the 81st Airborne Ranger Group which conducted highly effective night combat operations. Three points became apparent in the aftermath of the October offensive. First, it appeared the COSVN displayed its full combat capability in the attempted execution of the land grab campaign. Second, his combat forces were unprepared to deal with the situation resulting from the stalemate in negotiations, thereby lowering the morale of his tactical units. Third, the October offensive failed to achieve the enemy's desired effect on the November US Presidential elections and on the re-elected Nixon Administration's support of the Thieu regime. While GVN forces were countering enemy attacks in the southern portion of the military region, the 18th Division at An Loc initiated an offensive operation to retake Quan Loi airfield. Although divisional forces managed to retake approximately one-half of the airfield, the attack ultimately failed, due mainly to a piecemealing of forces and a failure to seize and hold the surrounding key terrain.

d. Reorganization of Corps Forces: By 5 November the enemy forces had been defeated and tactical activity returned to low levels once again. During the month of November, III Corps repositioned its forces with the goal of returning major units to their traditional areas of operation. In early November the 25th Division moved to Cu Chi and assumed responsibility for



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its traditional area of Long An, Hau Nghia and Tay Ninh Provinces. The 5th Division remained in Lai Khe, while the Mobile Strike Force was inactivated and its units returned to their parent organizations. In late November the III Corps Ranger Command with its three Ranger Groups replaced the 18th Division at An Loc, and the 18th Division moved to the Long Binh area and assumed responsibility for the four eastern provinces of the III Corps area, as well as the southern portion of Binh Duong Province. I particularly supported this move as it enabled III Corps to better employ the division-size command and control apparatus needed to successfully manage this large operational area. At the same time, the III Corps Ranger Command was thoroughly capable of providing an adequate defense for the An Loc area. As of 25 November friendly forces were disposed as shown on the map at Incl 3. Enemy activity during November, December, and early January was at a low level, as enemy subordinate tactical units were rotated to base areas to rest, resupply, receive replacements, and conduct political reindoctrination. Decisive engagement was avoided and actions were relegated to sporadic harassing attacks by fire and localized meeting engagements, usually provoked by friendly advances. During this period, intelligence sources gave indications that the enemy's low level of activity coincided with a substantial resupply effort throughout War Zone C in northern Tay Ninh Province and along the Saigon River Corridor. The two US Air Cavalry Troops under the operational control of TRAC were employed to locate supply routes, supply storage areas, and enemy base areas. Aerial reconnaissance identified significant activity in the Michelin-Minh Thanh area, as well as in War Zone C. ARVN and Territorial Force clearing operations failed to make significant contact with major enemy forces throughout the early part of December, further indicating that enemy forces had pulled back into traditional base areas in preparation for future operations. Through mid-December, the enemy situation was vague and we continued to receive frequent reports that the enemy planned to attack areas such as Chon Thanh, Tri Tam, or Tay Ninh.

e. Saigon River Corridor Operation: Although B-52 strikes and Tac Air were being effectively employed on targets identified by air cavalry visual reconnaissance and on targets gained by other intelligence sources, it became evident that ground operations into traditional enemy bases were necessary to fix and destroy enemy forces. To accomplish this mission III Corps initiated an operation into the Saigon River Corridor on 26 December 1972. I urged LTG Minh to conduct operations that included a sweep through the Michelin and Minh Thanh area on the east side of the river and a subsequent thrust into War Zone C on the west side. The first phase of the three phase operation began with the 5th Division's 8th Regiment conducting clearing

operations in the Iron Triangle, and 25th Division elements clearing north of Phu Hoa Dong through the Ho Bo Woods. This phase met with little resistance and Phase II began on 29 December. Phase II consisted of expanded operations into the Trapezoid by the 8th Regiment on the east side of the river and into the Boi Loi Woods and Ben Cui Plantation by two regiments of the 25th Division on the west side of the river. Resistance remained light during this phase, as the enemy continued to avoid contact. Phase III of this operation began on 12 January 1973, and during this phase the tempo of offensive operations increased. In the 5th Division AO the 8th Regiment attacked north from the Trapezoid towards the Michelin, while the 7th Regiment attacked northwest from Lai Khe and elements of the 9th Regiment attacked west from Chon Thanh towards the same objective area vicinity the Michelin Plantation. On 15 January the 52d Regiment, 18th Division joined the operation, filling a gap between the 7th and 8th Regiments. Concurrently the 46th Regiment, 25th Division attacked northeast from Tri Tam into the western portion of the Michelin, and the 49th Regiment attacked from Tay Ninh northeast along LTL13. Elements of the 25th Division failed to gain significant contact with the enemy, but both the 7th and 8th Regiments of the 5th Division made contact as they neared the Michelin. 8th Regimental units located caches which yielded significant amounts of enemy weapons and ammunition, and subsequently became decisively engaged with the 141st and 209th Regiments immediately south of the Michelin. Meanwhile elements of the 7th Regiment made contact with the enemy's 205th Regiment east of the Michelin. After much heavy fighting and at times some confusion, elements of the 8th Regiment exfiltrated to Tri Tam through blocking positions established by the 46th Regiment. The 7th Regiment and the 52d Regiment linked forces and returned to the Lai Khe area. Ground operations were supported by tactical air and B-52 strikes which proved to be extremely effective. B-52 strikes were employed in concentrated packages, and the success of these operations was evidenced by the large number of secondary explosions reported by the Air Force, and the materiel and personnel damage reported by the air cavalry units as a result of visual reconnaissance. Also 2,352 US and VNAF tactical air strikes were flown in support of ground operations. On 20 January the Saigon Corridor Operation was terminated and unit redeployments were conducted in preparation for the anticipated cease fire. Although the operation did not penetrate as deeply into the Michelin - Minh Thanh areas as planned, it did succeed in destroying significant numbers of enemy forces in addition to the many supply bases destroyed. During phase II of the operation, 414 enemy were killed and two were detained. The operation also kept major enemy forces off balance which precluded them from positioning themselves to be used decisively in operations connected with the cease fire.



f. The Impending Cease Fire: During the several days prior to the cease fire of 28 January, CG, III Corps redeployed his major units to defend population centers and lines of communication under his control. The III Corps Ranger Command remained in An Loc, while the 5th Division secured Chon Thanh, Lai Khe, and Ben Cat with its 9th, 8th, and 7th Regiments respectively. The 18th Division secured southeastern Binh Duong and northern Bien Hoa Provinces with 52d, 48th, and 43d Regiments, and the 25th Division secured Tri Tam, Tay Ninh, and the Trang Bang - Cu Chi area with its 46th, 49th, and 50th Regiments respectively. The concept of operations for friendly units was that of conducting security patrols forward of GVN controlled population centers and bases as a defensive measure. No attempt was made to conduct offensive operations into areas recently lost to the enemy such as Bu Dop, Loc Ninh, and Minh Thanh.

g. The Cease Fire Offensive: The early morning hours of 27 January saw the enemy execute an eleventh hour land grab preceding the announced cease fire time of 280800H January. The number and intensity of ground attacks by fire increased appreciably throughout the Corps area, with the heaviest ground attacks occurring in Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, Long Khanh, Bien Hoa, Binh Tuy and Binh Duong Provinces. Enemy dispositions on 28 January are shown on the map at Incl 4. On 29 January, activity remained at an increased level with major contacts south of Chon Thanh, Tay Ninh City, Trang Bang and Duc Hue (Hau Nghia), Trang Bom and Long Thanh (Bien Hoa), and Tanh Linh (Binh Tuy). On 31 January attacks near contested population centers continued but receded in intensity, and by 1 February it was becoming apparent that the critical period had passed. On 2 February only two major areas of concern remained, namely the Trang Bang area in Hau Nghia Province and the Thanh Linh area in Binh Tuy Province. Elements of the 7th and 9th NVA Divisions and the 429th Sapper Group showed no sizeable participation in the cease fire highpoint. The 209th Regiment, 7th NVA Division, was involved in limited actions near Phu Hoa Dong and Rach Bap (XT6730) in Binh Duong Province, as was the 205th Regiment southeast of Ben Cat. Non-divisional Main Force Units involved in the offensive were the 33d, 274th, C-50th, and 271st Independent Regiments. Enemy local force units bore the brunt of the cease fire fighting and although heavy casualties were suffered, they can be attributed with some degree of short term success. A total of 144 hamlets were contested at one time or another between 27 January and 6 February, when the last contested hamlet was cleared by friendly forces. On the GVN side, III Corps forces performed well at all levels. Regional Forces conducted aggressive clearing operations to eject the enemy from contested hamlets, and initially these territorial forces played the major role, since ARVN units were not committed until it became clear that the 7th and 9th NVA Divisions were not going to make a delayed entry into combat operations. When ARVN units were committed in critical areas, they

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fought well to eliminate the enemy threat. The 18th Division cleared enemy roadblocks on QL1 east of Trang Bom, on QL15 south of Long Thanh, on QL20 adjacent to the II Corps border, and along LTL2 in northern Phuoc Tuy Province swiftly and decisively. The 50th Regiment, 25th Division, and the 81st Airborne Rangers cleared one of the last pockets of enemy resistance in the Trang Bang area in a professional manner, while the 35th Ranger Battalion also performed well to eliminate the enemy threat at Tanh Linh. Casualty statistics for the period 28 January through 6 February illuminate the magnitude of enemy losses. III Corps reported 2269 enemy KIA, 43 CIA, three ralliers, and 90 crew-served and 446 individual weapons captured. Friendly losses for the same period were 254 KIA, 1003 WIA and 25 MIA. There are several significant aspects of the cease fire highpoint which became evident during the 28 January - 6 February period. The first is that the Saigon Corridor Operation reduced the combat capability of the 7th NVA Division and disrupted the timetable of its units to the extent that they were unable or unwilling to significantly participate in the offensive. Secondly, the population definitely sided with GVN forces, vacating hamlets when the enemy appeared and assisting GVN forces throughout the military region. It is also interesting to note that the Provisional Revolutionary Government confidently announced that Tay Ninh City would be its headquarters in South Vietnam, thinking that their forces could capture the city. Although heavy fighting took place around Tay Ninh, Regional Forces assisted by the 49th ARVN Regiment soundly defeated the enemy and the PRG was forced to fall back on Loc Ninh as a headquarters. Lastly it must be emphasized that US offensive activities ceased as of 280800 January, and thereafter GVN forces were on their own. III Corps units fought well at all levels, and their spirit is best evidenced by the manner in which they evicted the enemy from the areas he had overrun.

h. Post Cease Fire Offensive Highpoint: After 6 February enemy activity stabilized at a low level and was characterized by sporadic attacks by fire, isolated meeting engagements and occasional road interdiction incidents. During the second week in February activity was marked by indirect fire attacks in areas near JMC/ICCS sites, but none of these sites were hit. During the same period GVN forces continued limited security patrols to protect population centers and lines of communication. As the post cease fire activities progressed, it was expected that meeting engagements might continue in fringe areas that were considered to be controlled by both sides, but it was hoped that military activity would decrease. Beginning in mid-February, however, it became apparent that enemy activity was aimed at consolidating control of land and, in certain areas, expanding his control. Light to moderate attacks by fire continued to harass ARVN and Territorial forces apparently to inhibit friendly defensive patrolling. The enemy particularly concentrated on isolated outposts in an effort to drive out GVN forces. Almost on a daily basis attacks by fire occurred northwest of Song Be, southwest of An Loc,

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at Tri Tam, at Tonle Cham, and at the Rach Bap outpost on the northwestern corner of the Iron Triangle. At the latter two outposts the enemy announced by loudspeaker to friendly forces that they should evacuate the bases. By the first 30 days of the cease fire, III Corps reported 898 enemy violations; 530 ground attacks and 368 attacks by fire. Throughout the cease fire period intelligence sources indicated that the enemy was resupplying and bringing replacements across the border. Additionally in excess of 9000 PRG prisoners released in the military region provided the enemy a built-in replacement system. Concurrent with other activities, the enemy conducted an increased terrorism campaign. While during the first 30 days of the post cease fire period only three terrorist incidents were reported, nine occurred during the first ten days of March. Enemy initiatives during the third week of March were marked by shellings and ground probes against isolated GVN outposts located along both land and water borne resupply routes of the Saigon River Corridor. The activity also saw major subordinate regiments of the 7th NVA Division become actively engaged in post-cease fire hostilities, indicating the first sizeable employment of Divisional Main Force units since limited commitment during the initial highpoint on 28 January. At the same time, the 9th NVA Division Headquarters and at least one of its Regiments, probably the 271st, deployed southeast of An Loc near the Chi Linh Base Camp where LTL13 crosses the Song Be River. However, no offensive activity was initiated, suggesting that reconnaissance or resupply missions dictated the move. The outlying Tonle Cham Base Camp received daily attacks by fire, as did the Rach Bap outpost, while the garrison at Tri Tam was shelled sporadically. Accompanying the firing incidents were occasional ground attacks of varying intensities, the heaviest being on 15 March when the shellings culminated in a ground assault against the Rach Bap outpost that left 27 enemy dead, 10 friendly killed and 18 friendly wounded. Two enemy soldiers were also captured. One was a medic and the other an infantryman in the 209th Regiment, 7th NVA Division. The infantryman, who was wounded and died shortly after being captured, indicated that he was a former prisoner of the GVN and had been released at Minh Thanh only 15 days before. Intermittent indirect fire continued at Ben Cat, Lai Khe, Duc Thanh, northwest of Phuoc Binh and southwest of Ben Soi. The 7th Division's 1st Regiment deployed along highways TL2A and LTL1A east of Lai Khe where it ambushed a resupply convoy to Song Be on 15 March, resulting in seven friendly killed, 49 friendly wounded and 29 enemy killed. Friendly forces generally continued to conduct defensive patrolling to provide security for their base and field locations. The most notable exception was the 5th ARVN Division which mounted an operation on 19 March to relieve the beleaguered outpost at Rach Bap. The enemy intentions seem clear with continuing attacks by fire and in some cases ground attacks. There is enemy indication that military activity will continue during the cease fire period.

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### 4. (U) PERSONNEL:

a. Personnel Administration: Personnel administration has been the weakest area in the ARVN. In large measure this results from lack of command emphasis, lack of staff initiative, and a natural lack of concern for individuals. As always, ARVN commanders at all levels dominate their staff to an unusual degree, and lack of command emphasis in the personnel area has been extremely detrimental to any attempts to improve the existing systems. Recently, however, a decided shift in emphasis has been taking place in MR3. The ARVN commanders in this Corps area are beginning to play a more active role in the personnel field. Nevertheless, the cumbersome, rudimentary, and over-centralized personnel systems dictated by JGS in Saigon, continue to plague units in the field. It is believed that if these systems are not modernized, the current interest at the working level will soon vanish.

b. Strength Reporting: Late, inaccurate, and incomplete personnel strength reporting continues to diminish the effectiveness of the overall personnel management system. However, much improvement has been made in recent months. I feel that the current information generated by III Corps now has a fairly high degree of reliability. To maintain this degree of reliability, it will be essential to school-train additional personnel involved in the system, especially at battalion level.

c. Medical Treatment: An area needing a great deal of improvement, and perhaps the most difficult to improve, is in the field of medical care. In the main this is due to lack of resources. Dustoff helicopters are inadequate in numbers and their performance is marginal. The lack of effectiveness, in part, is the result of being controlled by the Vietnamese Air Force. Also in this area the number of qualified medical personnel is dwarfed by the demand. A possible solution would be to identify and train personnel to be para-medical specialists, on the order to the new US Army medical specialist warrant officer program. Dependent medical care is another greatly deficient area.

d. Personnel Actions: Other personnel considerations which continue to need increased emphasis are leave, and pay administration. Second only to adequate health programs, these are among the biggest single existing detriments to good morale. Once again, command emphasis has not been adequately exercised to insure that these programs are administered fairly, impartially, and effectively.

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e. Upgrading the Officer Corps: Contributory to many of the above problems is the lack of toughness on the part of ARVN commanders in eliminating incompetent officers. Many units place incompetent officers in meaningless positions on their staffs. Often these officers are senior in rank to those assigned to the principal staff positions, making it difficult for the more junior officers who have primary staff responsibilities to perform their duties, display initiative, and get close enough to their commander to have their suggestions and recommendations heard.

f. Disciplined Chain of Command Requirements: Lastly, there is a basic lack of discipline in the chain of command that results from many units commanders having influence through contacts outside of III Corps. Until these dual channels of loyalty can be eliminated, there will be a lack of unity of command in many areas, to include the assignment of key personnel.



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5. (U) LOGISTICS:

a. Supply: The ARVN supply system has functioned in a satisfactory manner during the period covered in this report. The 3rd Area Logistics Command provided support to both III Corps units and Territorial Forces organic to the provinces. US support consisted primarily of advice and assistance in establishing priorities, expediting supply actions through advisory channels, following up on requisitions, and in several emergency situations, obtaining supplies from the US supply system to meet ARVN requirements. The primary shortcoming noted in ARVN supply operations was a hesitancy to follow-up requisitions with higher headquarters.

b. Aerial Re-supply: The US aerial resupply of An Loc, which began during the enemy offensive in April 1972, ended on 24 January 1973. VNAF was equipped and trained with C-130 aircraft as part of PROJECT ENHANCE and assumed sole responsibility for airdrop of supplies on 25 January 1973. They experienced some difficulties at the beginning due to the small drop zone but recently have obtained better results than the USAF. Throughout the period, VNAF helicopters supplemented the US and VNAF airdrops and at times, due to enemy antiaircraft fire, were the only means of resupply. With QL 13 still unopened sixty days after the cease-fire, aerial resupply remains the only dependable means for provisioning An Loc for the foreseeable future.

c. Maintenance: US support to ARVN in maintenance matters was limited principally to coordinating with US advisors in higher headquarters in an attempt to obtain repair parts. ARVN does a remarkable job in maintaining equipment considering the age of some of the equipment and the frequent shortage of repair parts. ARVN does not have a material readiness reporting system like the US and such a system should not be imposed on them; however, a simplified material readiness report would be useful. The maintenance posture for ARVN units is monitored via deadline reports which are submitted through logistical channels. Deadline standards for ARVN equipment are much less stringent than for similar US equipment, i.e., if a vehicle runs, it is considered operational regardless of other deficiencies. Currently, the primary limiting factor in the ARVN maintenance program is the shortage of repair parts.

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**6. (C) CIVIL OPERATIONS:**

An important part of TRAC operations was that of overseeing Civil Operations and Rural Development Programs. This is an area in which significant strides were made and many of the programs in the civil field will serve as a foundation for continued progress in this region.

a. Territorial Forces: Regional and Popular Forces supported the pacification and development efforts by providing village and hamlet security through the conduct of operations against enemy local force units. As previously described various areas of the region experienced the beginnings of an enemy high point in early October which had the purpose of occupying hamlets in an attempt to gain control of population centers prior to a possible cease fire. The occupation of population centers and the short term interdiction of LOCs leading into Saigon caused Regional Forces to expand their efforts to counter these attacks. In an attempt to improve performance and bolster the Territorial Forces command structure during this critical time, seven District Chiefs were replaced. In late October and early November, the Territorial Forces continued to seek out the enemy and their aggressive spirit and actions resulted in increased enemy casualties. Their outstanding performance in many areas, particularly in Hau Nghia and Phuoc Tuy Provinces, played a major role in defeating the enemy's October offensive. During November, JGS approval was received to implement a portion of Phase II of the RF/PF upgrade program which authorized the activation of two additional Sector Tactical Command Posts and the upgrading of 23 Inter Company Group Headquarters into Battalion Headquarters. This move provided greater control of RF units in mobile operations as well as the capability of mounting regimental sized operations. Although the performance of Territorial Forces has been excellent, leadership at all levels must continue to receive attention. Additional training of Territorial Forces is needed to better coordinate artillery fires and tactical air support.

b. People's Self-Defense Force: The People's Self-Defense Force is an organization of citizens without military obligation which has the mission to support the government forces in maintaining security in the hamlets and to develop a spirit of community cooperation. The PSDF Support Leadership Training Program, which resulted in the training of approximately 4,000 elderly men and women terminated in December. This program provided the PSDF support elements with a large number of trained and highly motivated team leaders. Leadership training, which in turn provides motivation for other members is a continuous problem. While many citizens supported the objectives of the program, there is a certain amount of built-in opposition since its members must devote much of their time to family support.

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c. National Police: The National Police are striving toward their goal of developing a viable law enforcement and public service institution which has the capability of maintaining law and order. A very significant accomplishment within the National Police Program was the implementation of the National Police Management Information System which provides information on trends and needs for the entire spectrum of the National Police responsibility. Another factor in improved police service was the establishment of Village Police Stations (VPS) with an enlarged authorized strength. Each VPS was assigned a commissioned police officer as Chief who was also a sworn judicial officer, thus providing a judicial investigative capability at VPS level.

d. Vietnamese Information Service: In October 1972, VIS/PSYOPS operations generally took one of two courses. The first involved quick-reaction leaflet drops and loudspeaker operations to counter enemy offensive operations, but enemy ground-to-air fire often prevented the effective use of this technique. The second course was an effort to bolster military morale and dedication in preparation for the cease fire, and significant broadcast time on radio and television was devoted to the military's role in a "new" Vietnam. Officer candidates were used throughout MR3 in a face-to-face information program which increased the coverage capability of the program considerably. The officer candidates were withdrawn from the field on 15 January 1973, with indications that their presence had a definite favorable effect upon the pre-cessate fire mission of the VIS program.

e. Local Government: This program is designed to develop local leadership and to provide local autonomy in an effort to build a strong base support for the national government. The GVN has been so centralized since its inception that leaders of the country now feel that a strong base would insure the stability of the government. Village general assemblies where the people take part in planning and decision-making for community development, have shown increasing attendance and benefit from more active participation by the people. A program weakness is the lack of information being disseminated down to the people on the new decrees affecting the people at the grassroots level. In some villages/hamlets, lack of qualified personnel for the various positions, both elected and appointed, and the lack of interest among people for government positions have deterred programs. To strengthen village/hamlet government, some 680 Regional and Popular Forces personnel have been, or will be, assigned to about 16 per cent of the positions of Chief and Deputy Chief of villages/hamlets.

f. Economic: The enemy activity in October had little impact on the



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economy except in those areas directly affected by the fighting. As the rice harvest neared its peak, the price of rice fell rather significantly. Farming and business activities came to a standstill in Binh Long Province and northern Phuoc Long back in April and are essentially still in that status. Sporadic interruptions occurred in parts of Binh Duong, Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia and Phuoc Tuy when fighting erupted in these provinces. However, in rural communities not directly touched by the war, agriculture and other activities were normal. Highway conditions permitted the free movement for goods in most provinces and except for interruptions of the supply flow in areas where fighting occurred, market supplies were generally plentiful. Continued restrictions on logging affected economies of Phuoc Long and Tay Ninh Provinces. Binh Tuy Province which is not on the restricted list, has shown amazing growth in timber harvesting. Recognizing the need for diversification in Tay Ninh, efforts are underway to develop interest and programs in exportable crops. Two major weaknesses in the economic program appear to be the GVN inability, or reluctance, to reduce the rate of inflation and to establish effective programs to contain corruption.

g. Land Reform Program: The land-to-the-tiller (LTTT) Program was initiated to bring the rural people closer to the GVN through distribution of rice and secondary crop land to current tillers, and to provide compensation to former landlords for expropriated lands. The program's purpose is to correct the inequities and injustices caused by the old system of land tenure. This has been the first successful land reform program in MR3 and more than 111,171 hectares of land have been distributed to present tillers, thus exceeding the three-year goal established for the region.

h. War Victims: The number of displaced people in MR3 War Victims Centers has fluctuated between 45,000 and 50,000 during the period of October 1972 through January 1973. The majority of these fled from Binh Long and Phuoc Long at the start of the enemy offensive in April and have not been able to return to their homes. A total of some 80,000 war victims have been temporarily displaced throughout MR3 during the Nguyen Hue Campaign, with some 10,000 dwellings damaged or destroyed. The Ministry of Social Welfare provided funds and guidance to assist the victims, and relief committees organized and managed the program. Living facilities were improved, sanitation upgraded, water systems expanded and schools were built to improve the lives of the displaced persons. Displaced war victims created in October and November received relief during their time of misfortune. Temporary camps were established and people received food and medical care. Under the GVN Land Development and Hamlet Building Program, 9,000 permanently displaced war victims were resettled in new areas. These settlers received construction materials and money for home

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building and will receive farm land to cultivate. Public facilities such as schools, dispensaries and other government offices are provided for the settlers.

i. Agriculture: Reports indicate shortfalls in rice production as compared to the first crop of the previous year. Drought conditions in the western provinces (Long An, Hau Nghia, Tay Ninh and western Gia Dinh) during the July and August period and the flooding of the rice bowl in Binh Tuy Province during September and October were major factors for the shortfall. Efforts by the Ministry of Agriculture to increase late and or second crops plantings will offset the shortfall to some extent; however, again, this is weather dependent. The upland rice program has progressed as expected and will meet the objectives and schedule set forth by the GVN Rice Service. The major weakness of the agriculture program is a lack of prior planning. The import of US vegetable oils and corn at prices lower than that produced in-country continues to have a detrimental effect on local production and continued inflation affects all programs.

j. Public Works: The Public Works Department has the responsibility of supervising the Central Pacification and Development Council construction projects, such as construction and maintenance of roads and bridges, irrigation projects, water and electrical distribution systems, and some vertical construction. The road and bridge construction program for 1972 consisted of 44 projects, and over 99 percent of this work has now been completed. The irrigation program for 1972 consisted of 14 projects, 12 of which were completed. Although water and electrical distribution systems are considered to be of great importance in the development of villages and hamlets, progress was considerably reduced by the enemy offensive. As a result of the activity, only one water distribution system has been completed since my arrival. The repair of war-damaged public buildings has been a major project in Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, Hau Nghia, Phuoc Long and Phuoc Tuy Province, having replaced considerably more buildings than accounted for by the new construction program.

k. Rural Development Cadre: The RD Cadre Program consists of experienced personnel who are technically trained to perform pacification and development operations in support of Community Defense and Local Development (CDLD) Programs. The major area of responsibility is the Village Self-Development (VSD) Program, where the Cadre provide the expertise needed at the local level to promote, implement, and accomplish national and local objectives. The program was able to progress steadily throughout the region and the achievements have surpassed all expectations. The 1973 VSD Program is already well underway with the submission of proposed projects and completed plans.

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l. Transportation: Inadequate transportation within the provinces is a prevailing problem. The lack of transportation hampers operations and restricts proper supervision of village activities. Presently, the US support of this program is scheduled to terminate at the end of FY74. At that time, it is projected that the GVN will assume full support of the program on a permanent basis.

m. Ethnic Minorities: The Ethnic Minorities Program is designed to elevate the level of living for the people through general education, better agricultural methods and instruction in personal hygiene and environmental sanitation. The enemy activity in MR3 has resulted in some 15,528 Montagnards (4,093 families) taking refuge at various camps in Phuoc Long, Phuoc Tuy, Long Khanh and Bien Hoa Provinces. Significant contributions to the development of Ethnic Minorities have been recognized with the specific training of Montagnard cadremen and village and hamlet officials.

n. Education: In MR3, both elementary and secondary education have made significant quantitative progress, as enrollments, number of teachers and number of classrooms have increased steadily. In certain provinces (Binh Long, Phuoc Long, and Phuoc Tuy), the program was temporarily disrupted by enemy action; however, it is recovering rapidly. Often, school buildings that survived combat action in the villages were used as temporary shelters for homeless families. Some weaknesses exist in the education field such as low quality of hamlet teachers who were hurriedly appointed during the rapid expansion of enrollments, existing facilities not fully utilized, shortage of basic textbooks (more than a million in MR3), and outdated teaching methods.

o. Political Action: The overwhelming political factor dominating the scene since my arrival was the expectation of a cease fire. The efforts of both the enemy and the GVN to put themselves in the best possible position for this eventuality comprises the core of this period's history. It was a time when the political importance of actions taken had greater relevance and impact. Military engagements were seen less as the destruction of enemy force units, but more a matter of occupying hamlets. Province and district officials were removed when they failed to advance pacification programs rather than because of inept administration or malfeasance in office. Thus, for the GVN regional officials, the crucial issue was whether or not their actions were gaining political support from the people for the Saigon Government. In October, the GVN energetically and successfully employed its armed forces in driving enemy forces out of "contested" hamlets. Concurrently, the GVN stepped up its efforts to eliminate the VCI and destroy the enemy shadow supply system. GVN successes in these endeavors did much to lower

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enemy morale. The re-election of President Nixon and the failure of the cease fire to be announced in late October were even more serious blows to enemy morale. At the end of October, enemy troops who thought they would be received as liberation forces, found that the people fled from them to the GVN side, and that President Thieu had gained rather than lost public esteem by resisting the October cease fire proposals. The massive arrival of material for the GVN and the intensive air strikes on North Vietnam served both to weaken the enemy's will to continue the armed conflict, and strengthen the military capabilities of the GVN. During this period the GVN launched the Democracy Party which for all practical purposes is a paper organization. In large measure it is composed of government officials and military officers and has not been able to weld together the people in a political sense. Again during the January cease fire connected land-grab offensive by the enemy, the population reacted by shunning the enemy and supporting GVN forces. Throughout the military region there were many examples of individuals and groups actively assisting GVN troops. The post cease fire weeks found the GVN in the enviable position of having a great deal of popular support.

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### 7. (C) EFFORTS TO ATTAIN A TRUE CEASE FIRE:

a. Situation Immediately Following the Cease Fire. The highpoint of military activity during the several days after the cease fire was an anticipated eventuality, but it was hoped that activity would be progressively reduced to a level which JMC and ICCS elements could manage. After GVN units cleared the enemy from hamlets and lines of communication, friendly operations were reduced to local security patrols. Most enemy forces in the region remained in close proximity to the hamlets they contested immediately following the cease fire and were on, or just beyond, the periphery of the friendly patrols. Limited meeting engagements occurred daily with the common enemy reaction being disengagement and an attack by fire on the friendly force. After the first few days of the cease fire, the large majority of total incidents were attacks by fire and booby trap incidents. GVN elements continued the use of tactical air and artillery in retaliation but on a reduced level. Although there were no large engagements in this military region, the incident rate remained between 20 and 30 daily.

b. Escalation in Enemy Activity During the Last Half of March. Beginning in mid March the main force units of the NVA, previously fairly inactive, commenced an ever increasing pressure with shellings and ground probes against isolated GVN outposts located at advantageous points along the Saigon River Corridor. This offensive activity also saw major subordinate Regiments of the 7th NVA Division become actively engaged in post-cease fire hostilities, indicating the first sizeable employment of Divisional Main Force units since the initial cease fire highpoint. The 9th NVA Division HQ and at least one Regiment, probably the stronger 271st, deployed southeast of An Loc near the Chi Linh Base Camp where LTL 13 crosses the Song Be River. However, no offensive activity was initiated, suggesting that reconnaissance and resupply missions dictated the move. The outlying Tonle Cham Base Camp received daily attacks by fire and on occasion ground attacks, as did the Rach Bap Outpost, while the garrison at Tri Tam was shelled sporadically. Accompanying the firing incidents were occasional ground attacks of varying intensity, the heaviest being on 15 March when the shellings culminated in a ground assault against the Rach Bap perimeter that left 27 enemy dead, 10 friendly killed and 18 friendly wounded. Two enemy soldiers were also captured. One was a medic and the other an infantryman in the 209th NVA Regiment. The infantryman, who died shortly after capture, indicated that he was a former prisoner of the GVN and had been released at Minh Thanh only 15 days before. Intermittent indirect fire continued at Ben Cat, Lai Khe, An Loc, Duc Thanh, northwest of Phuoc Binh and southwest of Ben Soi.



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c. Deployment of the JMC/ICCS to the Field. The US Element of FPJMC (The Four Party Joint Military Commission) were deployed immediately after the cease fire including the Joint Military Teams however the DRV/PRG element were not deployed until approximately X+30, and it became clear that the PRG/DRV were employing every tactic to stall movement to the five field sites and to become operational at the regional level. The ICCS Regional element deployed on X+7 and the field teams were deployed by X+28. They were not able however to act as a dampener on military action. From the start of the cease fire period the role of the remaining US elements in Military Region 3 was that of pursuing all possible avenues to make the cease fire work.

d. Efforts to gain GVN Support for Cease Fire. When it became clear that the GVN support for the JMC/ICCS elements was unsatisfactory, the US moved expeditiously to provide adequate facilities. A maximum effort was made to set the control machinery in motion. Throughout the period I continued liaison with the III Corps Commander and pointed out that for the long run it was imperative that the GVN make a maximum attempt to observe the cease fire. I discussed support of the JMC with General Minh at great length, stressing the following points: in this military region the GVN dealt from a position of strength; they had defeated a maximum effort by the enemy during the past year and if anything were stronger than before; they possessed an army prepared for major combat should it become necessary and they had the support of the population; the Corps Commander was in an excellent position to effectively support the cease fire and its machinery; the gain from such an effort would be US and world recognition that South Vietnam was responsibly striving to join the family of peaceful nations. Although General Minh and I agreed on many of these points and he significantly stepped up his support efforts, there remained an extreme distrust of the PRG/DRV intentions that made the defusing of military actions a painfully slow process.

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### 8. (U) SUPPORT OF JMC/ICCS ACTIVITIES:

TRAC was tasked to coordinate US support for all FPJMC/ICCS functions, installations and facilities in MR3.

#### a. FPJMC - Region V

(1) Disposition - Region V of the FPJMC consisted of 10 of the 11 Provinces in MR3, the exception being Binh Tuy Province which was included in Region IV, Headquarters. Region V FPJMC was established in the Tam Hiep compound (near Bien Hoa). The Sub-Regions of Region V were as follows:

<u>Sub-Region</u>	<u>Province</u>	<u>Team Location</u>
A	Long An	Tan An
B	Long Khanh Phuoc Tuy	Xuan Loc
C	Binh Long Phuoc Long	An Loc
D	Tay Ninh Hau Nghia	Cu Chi
E	Binh Duong Bien Hoa	Ben Cat

#### (2) Facilities & Support Activities:

Initial guidance indicated that all support to the FPJMC would be provided by the GVN with some assistance from US military working through a contractor (PA&E). The ARVN approach to this support was on an item-by-item basis requiring authority for issue of specified numbers of equipment and supplies. This method was grossly ineffective and necessarily time consuming. Finally the Commanding General III Corps and MR3 was persuaded to issue an all encompassing directive to both Corps and Province personnel to provide the required support. Added emphasis was given by myself and the TRAC staff to press for the early completion of all sites. Sites were ready for occupancy with acceptable facilities on the dates indicated:

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<u>Team Location</u>	<u>Team Site</u>	<u>Date Ready for Occupancy</u>
Tan An	Sector Intel Plat Housing Area	17 Feb 73
Xuan Loc	ARVN Dep Housing Area	17 Feb 73
An Loc	An Loc	26 Feb 73
Cu Chi	RF Bn Camp	17 Feb 73
Ben Cat	Cav Sqd Compound	17 Feb 73

## b. ICCS - Region V

(1) Disposition: ICCS Field Team sites were designated for the five locations of the FPJMC Team Sites plus Xa Mat, An Thanh and Vung Tau. An Thanh was later dropped and an additional team designated for Bien Hoa Air Base. Headquarters for Region V ICCS was established in Bien Hoa City.

(2) Facilities and Support Activities: It was anticipated that the ICCS mission would be much longer in duration than the FPJMC, therefore, more permanent facilities were provided for the ICCS. The Headquarters facility in the Bien Hoa Club (a hotel in the city of Bien Hoa leased by PA&E) was ready for occupancy on 4 Feb 73. The ICCS field teams were located in leased or former US facilities, with up grading accomplished by PA&E. Facilities selected and dates occupied follows:

<u>Field Team Location</u>	<u>Field Team Site</u>	<u>Date Occupied</u>
Tan An	Private Home (leased), Tan An	24 Feb 73
Xuan Loc	US Adv Tm 49 Compound Xuan Loc	23 Feb 73
An Loc	US Adv Tm 91 Compound Lam Son	24 Feb 73
Cu Chi	25th DCAT's Adv Tm Compound, Cu Chi	23 Feb 73
Ben Cat	US Adv Tm 91 Compound Lam Son	24 Feb 73



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<u>Field Team Location</u>	<u>Field Team Site</u>	<u>Date Occupied</u>
Xa Mat	Philippine Med Tm Compound, Tay Ninh City	unoccupied to date
Vung Tau	Vinnell Compound, Vung Tau	25 Feb 73
Bien Hoa	Bien Hoa Air Base	05 Mar 73

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9. (C) CONCLUSION:

During the period 4 October 1972 until 28 March 1973 the GVN military forces and civilian apparatus in Military Region III performed well. With limited combat assistance from US, GVN forces defeated two major attempts at population and territorial control. The country has made significant progress since the time when GVN forces were assigned a minor role in local defense while US combat elements were tasked with the major interdiction mission. The success of the Vietnamization program was evidenced during the post-cease fire flurry of activity when GVN forces were completely on their own. The senior officers are better now than ever before. However, there still remains much to be accomplished. The enemy intention to annex the south appears to remain fixed, and renewed military actions in the future are likely. Many III Corps units have been engaged in continuous combat for over a year and, although all units are capable of meeting the present enemy threat, they are operating at a low level of efficiency. In order to meet the likely increased threat, higher levels of readiness must be reached and continued military and economic aid will be necessary. Changes which must be realized follow:

a. Training: The entire training concept should be placed under a central training command, which should organize and monitor both individual training of soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers and should establish standards of unit training. Recruits should receive standardized training at national level, while units should participate in army training programs as practiced in the US Army. Special emphasis must be given to combined arms training both at the unit level and at the commander level of all combat branches. Unit training within the divisions must be nationally oriented as opposed to regionally oriented.

b. Personnel: A system must be instituted whereby military service is a universal requirement for a period of perhaps three years. Among other benefits this would eliminate some of the older soldiers, who can barely participate in combat operations, from the combat units. Upon completion of service the individual might return to his home area and participate in a reserve program. More emphasis must be placed on the morale building programs that are currently lacking, such as increased dependent housing and services, more efficient pay and improved administration. In this regard sufficient dependent facilities must be established to enable divisional forces to be less regionally oriented and eventually capable of being deployed country-wide. Another necessary institution is a veterans organization which could look out for the country's veterans. Also needed is a personnel promotion system based on duty performance and merit.

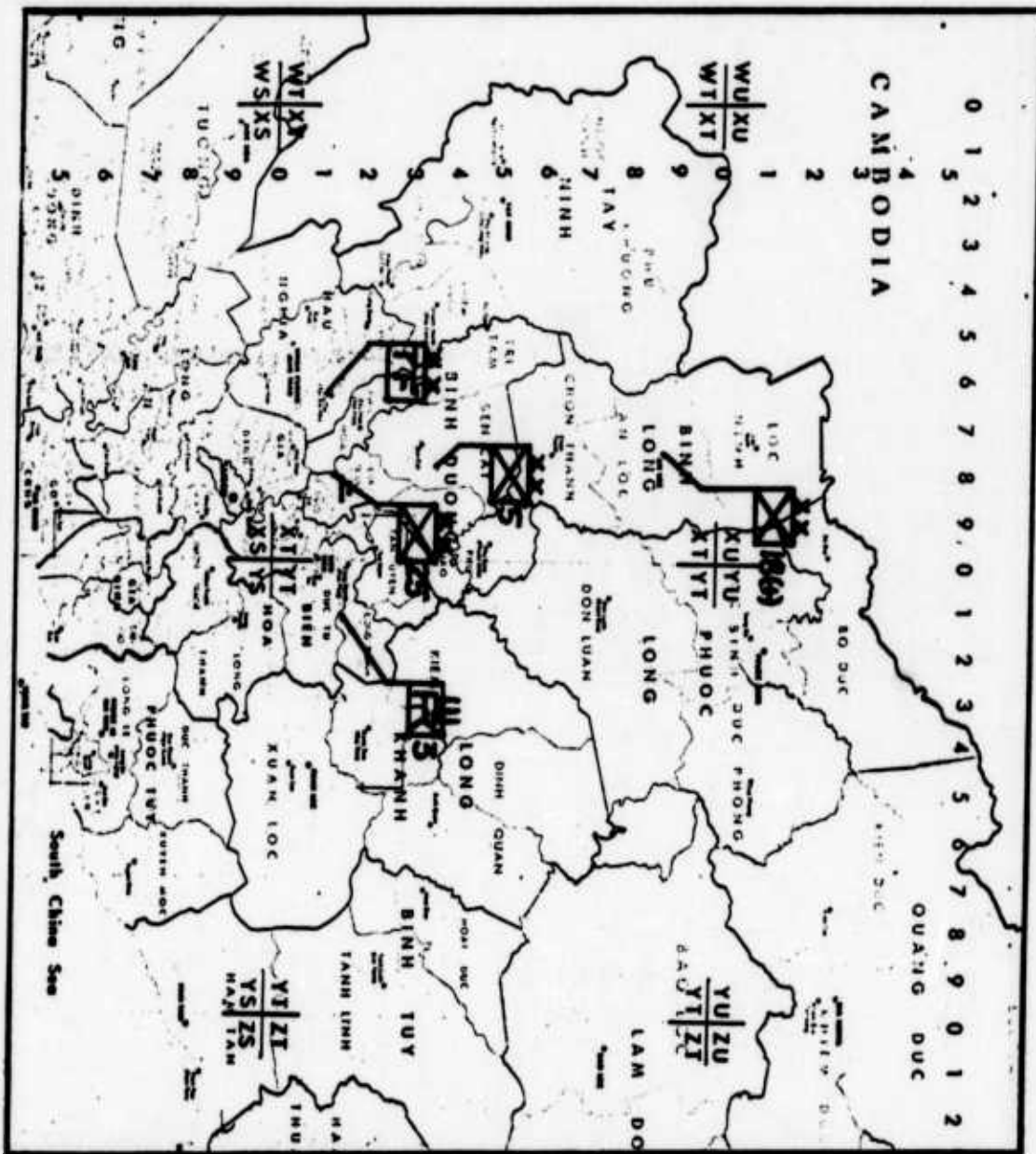
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c. Logistics: In the maintenance area increased command emphasis must be exerted to upgrade maintenance standards. In this regard commanders must be educated in the field of maintenance and the reporting system must provide the commander with a readily available analysis of the operational readiness of the equipment in his unit. In the supply area the system must be decentralized enough to allow responsible distribution of items. Commanders must emphasize supply discipline and soldiers must be schooled to respect their equipment. The logistics area becomes increasingly important due to the age and condition of equipment currently in the inventory.

d. Leadership: Although great progress has been made in the past, there remains a big job ahead. The questions remains open if the leadership is sufficiently enlightened to overcome the complex social and economic problems that face this country, and if it possesses the drive and perseverance to accomplish the tasks necessary to retain its present status of superiority.

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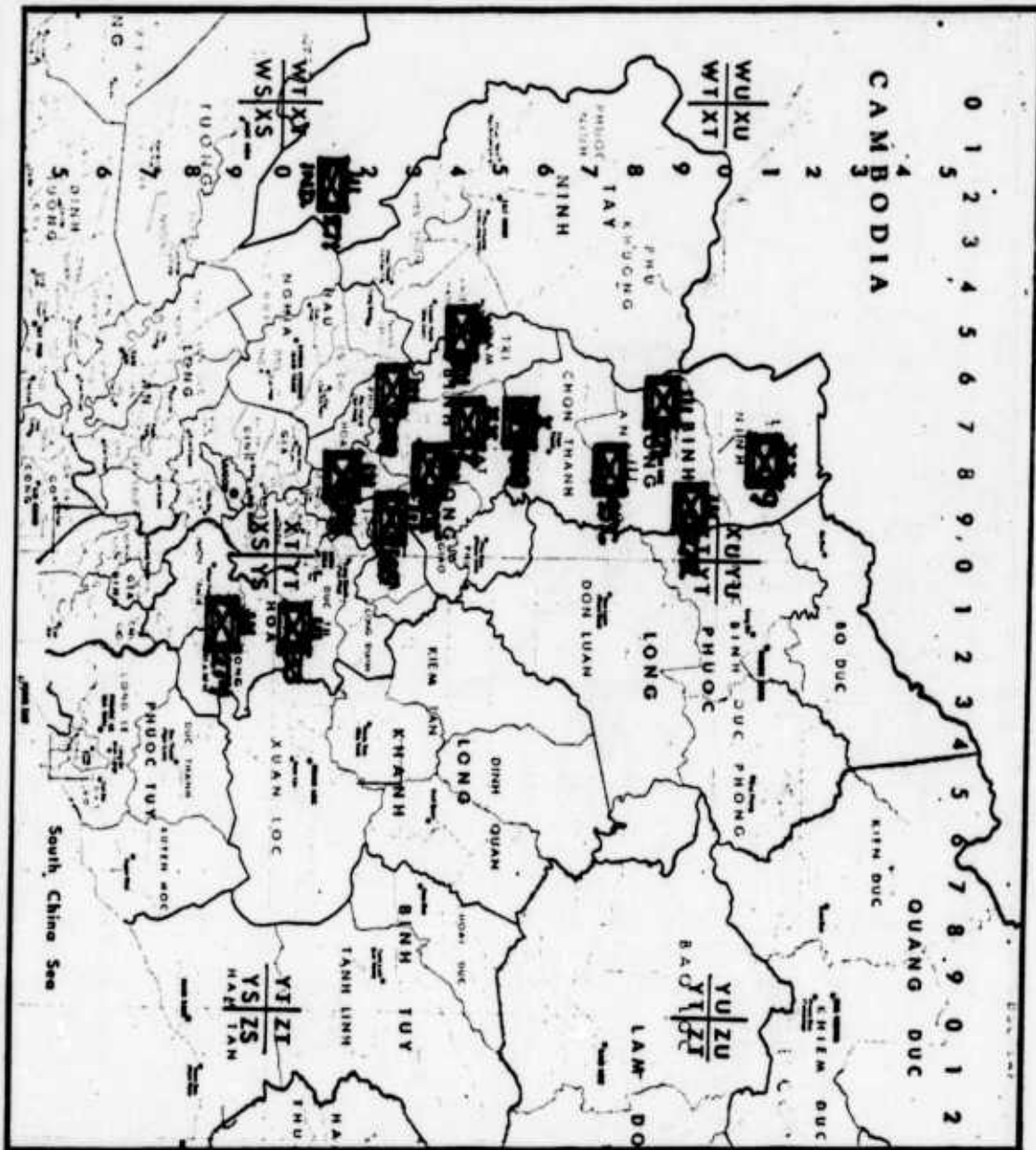


**FRIENDLY. DISPOSITIONS AS OF 4 OCT 73**

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ENEMY DISPOSITIONS AS OF 4 OCT 72

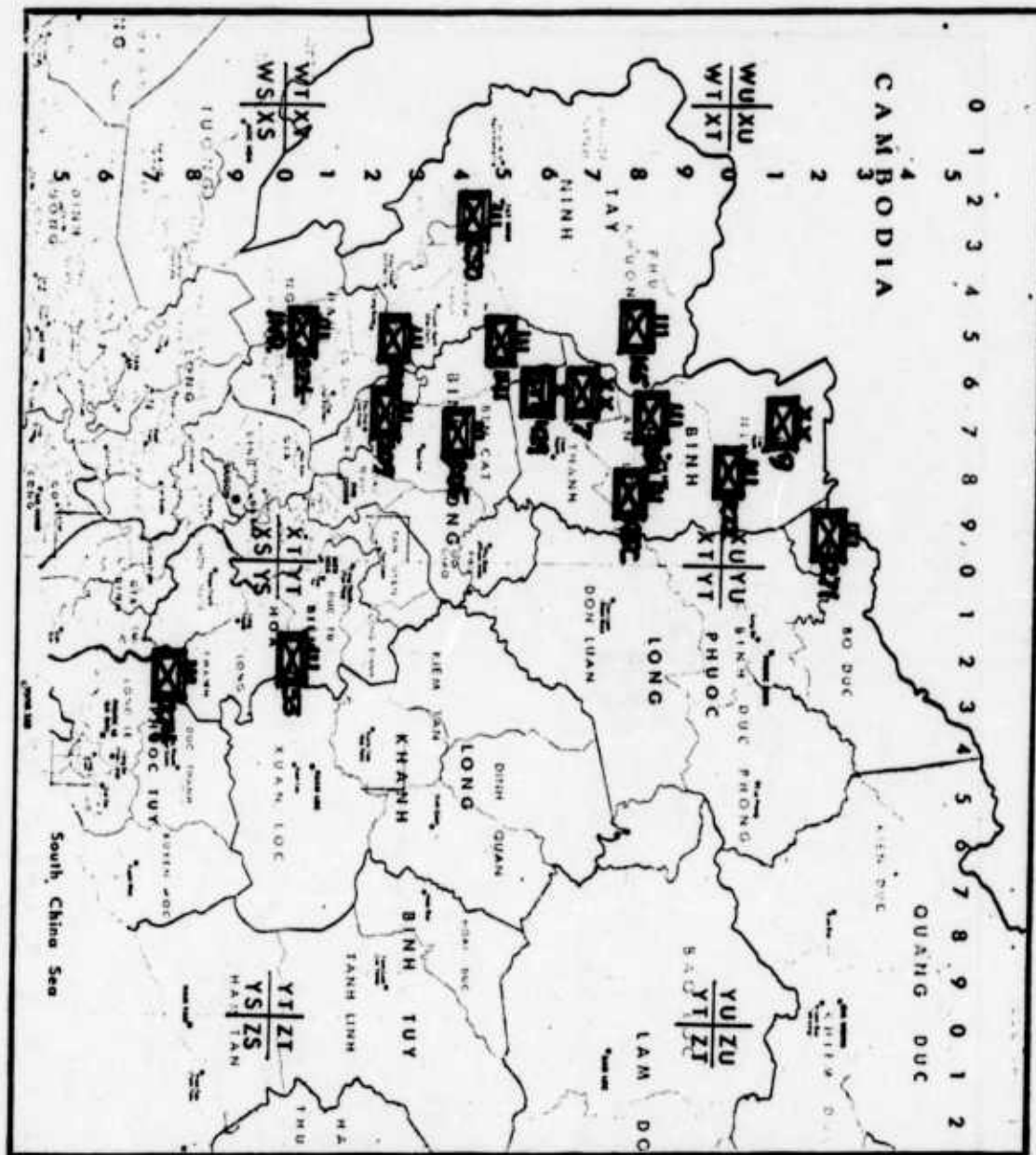
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d.		
10. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT		
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