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SUBJECT: Command histories and historical sketches of RVNAF divisions

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The enclosure to this airgram, "Command Histories and Historical Sketches of RVANF Divisions," includes lists of commanders and historical sketches of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces' (RVNAFs') eleven infantry divisions, the Airborne Division and the Marine division. Also included are lists of commanders of four corps.

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COMMAND HISTORIES AND HISTORICAL SKETCHES OF RVNAF DIVISIONS

1. The command histories and historical sketches that follow were prepared by an Embassy Officer who became interested in the origins of major units of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) but could find little information on the subject readily available.

2. A number of persons and organizations provided assistance during this compilation process. They included members of the U.S. mission as well as colleagues from foreign embassies. Some were “old hands” in Vietnam and were able to provide information reaching back a decade or more. The Regional Assistance Commands of the former U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) provided valuable assistance in gathering data from the field.

3. The historical sketches are based almost entirely on Vietnamese sources. Many RVNAF officers generously shared their time and recollections and offered advice. Additional source material was provided by the archives of the RVNAF Joint General Staff, the RVNAF Political Warfare Department, and the Military History Office of the Joint General Staff. The Office’s 1972 publication, *RVNAF in the Formative Stage: 1946-1955* (already out of print), is an invaluable reference for the period it covers. Several of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) divisions -- among them the 7th, 9th, and 23rd have produced their own unit histories in printed form.

4. Unavoidably there are probably a number of errors in the text. In some cases, there were conflicts in dates in other “facts.” The most probable dates and “facts” have been used here. In the case of dates of command, it has often been impossible to tell whether the dates furnished represent the day an officer was officially appointed--sometimes with retroactive effect--or the date he physically assumed command of his unit. Whenever possible, the latter date has been the one used.

5. The highest rank an officer attained while commanding a particular unit is the one appearing by his name. It should be noted that the general officer rank structure followed the French model until the mid-1960s when the use of American general officer rank structure was introduced.

6. Wherever possible, Defense Ministry decrees sanctioning the formation of divisions and the JGS orders implementing the decrees have been included in the historical sketches. The term “JGS order” used in the sketches usually refers to the Joint General Staff instruction known in French times as *notes de service* and since then as *su vu van thu*. Decrees and orders were sometimes issue with retroactive effect.

7. Some abbreviations used:

RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
JGS	The RVNAF Joint General Staff
CPT	Captain
MAJ	Major
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
COL	Colonel
BG	Brigadier General
MG	Major General
LTG	Lieutenant General

8. Part 2 of this paper includes the command histories of the eleven ARVN infantry divisions, the Airborne Division, the Marine division, and the four corps. Part 2 consists of short historical sketches of the eleven infantry divisions, the Airborne Division, and the Marine division.

PART 1

Command Histories of the Eleven ARVN Infantry Divisions,
the Airborne Division, the Marine division and the four Corps

1st Division

COL	Le Van	Nghiem	1st Div	01/01/55	12/15/55
COL	Nguyen	Khanh	1st Div	12/15/55	08/14/57
COL	Ton That	Dinh	1st Div	08/14/57	08/09/58
COL	Nguyen Van	Chuan	1st Div	08/09/58	07/30/59
COL	Ton That	Xung	1st Div	07/30/59	12/02/60
COL	Nguyen Duc	Thang	1st Div	12/02/60	10/01/61
COL	Nguyen Van	Thieu	1st Div	10/01/61	12/08/62
COL	Do Cao	Tri	1st Div	12/08/62	12/12/63
COL	Tran Thanh	Phong	1st Div	12/12/63	02/19/64
BG	Nguyen Chanh	Thi	1st Div	02/19/64	10/21/64
BG	Nguyen Van	Chuan	1st Div	10/21/64	03/14/66
BG	Phan Xuan	Nhuan	1st Div	03/14/66	06/18/66
MG	Ngo Quang	Truong	1st Div	06/18/66	08/23/70
MG	Pham Van	Phu	1st Div	08/23/70	11/12/72
BG	Le Van	Thao	1st Div	11/12/72	10/31/73
COL	Nguyen Van	Diem	1st Div	10/31/73	

2nd Division

COL	Ton That	Dinh	2nd Div	01/01/55	11/02/56
LTC	Dang Van	Son	2nd Div	11/22/56	06/14/57
LTC	Le Quang	Luong	2nd Div	06/14/57	08/23/58
COL	Duong Ngoc	Lam	2nd Div	08/23/58	06/08/61
COL	Lam Van	Phat	2nd Div	06/08/61	06/18/63
COL	Truong Van	Chuong	2nd Div	06/18/63	01/30/64
BG	Ton That	Xung	2nd Div	12/06/63	01/30/64
BG	Ngo	Dzu	2nd Div	01/30/64	07/29/64
COL	Nguyen Thanh	Sang	2nd Div	07/29/64	10/15/64
MG	Hoang Xuan	Lam*	2nd Div	10/15/64	01/10/67
MG	Nguyen Van	Toan	2nd Div	01/10/67	01/22/72
BG	Phan Hoa	Hiep	2nd Div	01/22/72	08/27/72
BG	Tran Van	Nhut	2nd Div	08/27/72	04/30/75

* Concurrently Commander of I Corps from May 30, 1966.

3rd Division

BG	Vu Van	Giai**	3rd Div	10/01/71	05/03/72
MG	Nguyen Duy	Hinh	3rd Div	06/09/72	
BG	Vu Quang	Giai	3rd Div	1973	04/30/75

** BG Giai was relieved of command on May 3, 1972.

5th Division

COL	Vong A	Sang	5th Div	03/01/53	10/25/56
COL	Pham Van	Dong	5th Div	10/25/56	03/18/58
LTC	Nguyen Quang	Thong	5th Div	03/18/58	09/16/58
COL	Ton That	Xung	5th Div	09/16/58	11/19/58
LTC	Dang Van	Son	5th Div	11/19/58	08/03/59
COL	Nguyen Van	Chuan	5th Div	08/03/59	05/20/61
BG	Tran Ngoc	Tam	5th Div	05/20/61	10/16/61
COL	Nguyen Duc	Thang	5th Div	10/16/61	12/20/62
COL	Nguyen Van	Thieu	5th Div	12/20/62	02/02/64
BG	Dang Thanh	Liem	5th Div	02/02/64	06/05/64
BG	Cao Hao	Hon	5th Div	06/05/64	10/21/64
BG	Tran Thanh	Phong	5th Div	10/21/64	07/19/65
MG	Pham Quoc	Thuan	5th Div	07/19/65	08/15/69
MG	Nguyen Van	Hieu	5th Div	08/15/69	06/14/71
BG	Le Van	Hung	5th Div	06/14/71	09/04/72
BG	Tran Quoc	Lich	5th Div	09/04/72	11/07/73
Col	Le Nguyen	Vy	5th Div	11/07/73	suicide

7th Division

LTC	Nguyen Huu	Co	7th Div	01/01/55	06/15/55
COL	Ton That	Xung	7th Div	06/15/55	04/27/57
LTC	Ngo	Dzu	7th Div	04/27/57	03/17/58
COL	Tran Thien	Khiem	7th Div	04/17/58	03/30/59
COL	Huynh Van	Cao	7th Div	03/30/59	12/22/62
COL	Bui Dinh	Dam	7th Div	12/22/62	11/01/63
BG	Nguyen Huu	Co	7th Div	11/01/63	11/05/63
COL	Pham Van	Dong	7th Div	11/05/63	12/02/63
BG	Lam Van	Phat	7th Div	12/02/63	02/02/64
COL	Hui Huu	Nhon	7th Div	02/02/64	03/07/64
COL	Huynh Vau	Ton	7th Div	03/07/64	09/16/64
BG	Nguyen Bao	Tri	7th Div	09/16/64	10/09/65
BG	Nguyen Viet	Thanh	7th Div	10/09/65	07/03/68
BG	Nguyen Thanh	Hoang	7th Div	07/03/68	01/16/70
MG	Nguyen Khoa	Nam	7th Div	01/16/70	01/01/74
BG	<i>Tran van</i>	<i>Hai</i>	<i>7th Div</i>	<i>04/30/75</i>	<i>suicide</i>

9th Division

COL	Bui	Dzinh	9th Div	01/01/62	11/07/63
COL	Doan Van	Quang	9th Div	11/07/63	02/09/64
BG	Vinh	Loc	9th Div	02/09/64	05/29/65
BG	Lam Quang	Thi	9th Div	05/29/65	07/03/68
MG	Tran Ba	Di	9th Div	07/03/68	10/26/73
BG	Huynh Van	Lac	9th Div	10/26/73	

18th Division

COL	Nguyen Van	Manh	18th Div	06/05/65	08/20/65
BG	Lu	Lan	18th Div	08/20/65	09/16/66
BG	Do Ke	Giai	18th Div	09/16/66	08/20/69
MG	Lam Quang	Thi	18th Div	08/20/69	04/04/72
BG	Le Minh	Dao	18th Div	04/04/72	

21st Division

LTC	Nguyen Bao	Tri*	21st Div	06/01/59	09/08/59
LTC	Tran Thanh	Chieu	21st Div	09/08/59	02/02/60
COL	Tran Thien	Khiem	21st Div	02/02/60	12/01/62
COL	Bui Hue	Nhon	21st Div	12/01/62	11/01/63
COL	Cao Hao	Hon	21st Div	11/01/63	06/01/64
BG	Dang Van	Quang**	21st Div	06/01/64	01/20/65
COL	Nguyen Van	Phuoc	21st Div	01/20/65	03/24/65
BG	Nguyen Van	Minh	21st Div	03/24/65	06/15/68
MG	Nguyen Vinh	Nghi	21st Div	06/15/68	05/03/72
BG	Ho Trung	Hau	21st Div	05/03/72	08/21/72
BG	Chuong Dzenh	Quay	21st Div	08/21/72	06/09/73
BG	Le Van	Hung	21st Div	06/09/73	Suicide

* LTC Tri became Commander of the 11th Light Division, the predecessor unit of the 21st Division, on October 16, 1957

** BG Quang left the Division on January 20, 1965. Col Nguyen Van Phuoc was Acting Commander in the interim period.

22nd Division

LTC	Tran Thanh	Chieu*	22nd Div	04/01/59	09/08/59
LTC	Nguyen Hao	Tri	22nd Div	09/08/59	11/05/63
COL	Nguyen Thanh	Sang	22nd Div	11/05/63	02/05/64
BG	Linh Quang	Vien	22nd Div	02/05/64	09/07/64
COL	Nguyen Van	Hieu	22nd Div	09/07/64	10/24/64
BG	Nguyen Xuan	Thinh	22nd Div	10/24/64	04/01/65
BG	Nguyen Thanh	Sang	22nd Div	04/01/65	06/28/66
BG	Nguyen Van	Hieu	22nd Div	06/28/66	08/11/69
BG	Le Ngoc	Trien	22nd Div	08/11/69	03/01/72
COL	Le Duc	Dat**	22nd Div	03/01/72	04/01/72
BG	<i>Phan Dinh</i>	<i>Niem</i>	<i>22nd Div</i>	<i>04/02/72</i>	

* LTC Chieu became Commander of the 14th Light Division, the predecessor unit of the 22nd Division, on March 28, 1958. Other Commanders of the 14th Light Division were LTC Nguyen Van Chuan (08/01/55), LTC Le Huy Duyen (02/19/57), LTC Ho Van To (06/14/57)

** Missing in Action, April 22, 1972.

23rd Division*

LTC	Tran Thanh	Phong	23rd Div	05/19/59	05/17/61
COL	Le Quang	Luong	23rd Div	05/17/61	12/14/63
BG	Hoang Xuan	Lam	23rd Div	12/14/63	10/14/64
BG	Lu	Lan	23rd Div	10/14/64	08/20/65
BG	Nguyen Van	Manh	23rd Div	08/20/65	11/24/66
BG	Truong Quang	An**	23rd Div	11/24/66	09/09/68
BG	Vo Van	Canh	23rd Div	09/09/68	01/25/72
BG	Ly Tong	Ba	23rd Div	01/25/72	10/20/72
BG	Tran Van	Cam	23rd Div	10/20/72	11/14/73
COL	Le Truong	Tuong	23rd Div	11/24/73	

* Note: LTC Bui Dzinb became Commander of the 15th Light Division, the predecessor unit of the 23rd Division, on September 4, 1958. It is not clear whether or not he was also the first Commander of the 23rd Division when it came into being on April 1, 1959. Other Commanders of the 15th Light Division were LTC Nguyen The Nhu (08/01/55), Nguyen Van Vinh (09/16/56).

** Killed in action (helicopter crash).

25th Division

COL	Nguyen Van	Chuan	25th Div	07/01/62	12/28/62
COL	Lu	Lan	25th Div	12/28/62	04/19/64
COL	Nguyen Viet	Dan	25th Div	04/19/64	12/01/64
BG	Nguyen Thanh	Sang	25th Div	12/01/64	04/06/65
BG	Phan Trong	Chinh	25th Div	04/06/65	01/10/68
LTG	Nguyen Xuan	Thinh	25th Div	01/10/68	01/25/72
BG	Le Van	Tu	25th Div	01/25/72	11/07/73
COL	Nguyen Huu	Toan	25th Div	11/07/73	

Airborne Division

LTC	Do Cao	Tri	Abn Div	03/01/55	09/01/56
COL	Nguyen Chanh	Thi	Abn Div	09/01/56	11/12/60
COL	Cao Van	Vien	Abn Div	11/12/60	12/19/64
LTG	Du Quoc	Dong	Abn Div	12/19/64	11/11/72
BG	Le Quang	Luong	Abn Div	11/11/72	

Marine Division

LTC	Le Quang	Trong	Marine Div	10/01/54	01/16/56
MAJ	Pham Van	Lieu	Marine Div	01/16/56	07/31/56
CPT	Bui Pho	Chi*	Marine Div	07/31/56	09/30/56
MAJ	Le Nhu	Hung	Marine Div	09/30/56	05/07/60
MAJ	Le Nguyen	Khang	Marine Div	05/07/60	12/16/63
LTC	Nguyen Ba	Lien	Marine Div	12/16/63	02/26/64
LTG	Le Nguyen	Khang	Marine Div	02/26/64	05/05/72
BG	Bui The	Lan	Marine Div	05/05/72	

* Acting Commander

I Corps
Organized June 1, 1957
(JGS Order 2,145/TTM/1/1/MK of May 11, 1957)

LTG	Thai Quang	Hoang	I Corps	11/23/56	10/15/57
LTG	Tran Van	Don	I Corps	10/15/57	12/07/62
MG	Le Van	Nghiem	I Corps	12/07/62	08/21/63
MG	Do Cao	Tri	I Corps	08/21/63	12/11/63
LTG	Nguyen	Khanh	I Corps	12/11/63	01/30/64
MG	Ton That	Xung	I Corps	01/30/64	11/14/64
LTG	Nguyen Chanh	Thi	I Corps	11/14/64	03/14/66
MG	Nguyen Van	Chuan	I Corps	03/14/66	04/09/66
LTG	Ton That	Dinh	I Corps	04/09/66	05/15/66
MG	Huynh Van	Cao	I Corps	05/15/66	05/30/66
LTG	Hoang Xuan	Lam	I Corps	05/30/66	05/03/72
LTG	Ngo Quang	Truong	I Corps	05/30/72	

* Some sources cite LTG Hoang as the first I Corps Commander. The date given is his date of appointment as Commander of the of 2nd Military Region (present-day Military Region 1)

II Corps
Organized October 1, 1957

MG	Tran Ngoc	Tam	II Corps	10/01/57	08/13/58
MG	Ton That	Dinh	II Corps	08/13/58	12/20/62
LTG	Nguyen	Khanh	II Corps	12/20/62	12/12/63
LTG	Do Cao	Tri	II Corps	12/12/63	09/15/64
MG	Nguyen Huu	Co	II Corps	09/15/64	06/25/65
LTG	Vinh	Loc	II Corps	06/25/65	02/28/68
LTG	Lu	Lan	II Corps	02/25/68	09/28/70
LTG	Ngo	Dzu	II Corps	09/28/70	05/10/72
MG	Nguyen Van	Toan	II Corps	05/10/72	
MG	Pham Van	Phu	II Corps	12/01/74	02/02/75

III Corps
Provisionally Organized June 1, 1959
Permanently Organized May 20, 1960

LTG	Thai Quang	Hoang	III Corps	03/01/59	10/11/59
LTG	Nguyen Ngoc	Le	III Corps	10/11/59	05/06/60
MG	Le Van	Nghiem	III Corps	05/06/60	12/07/62
MG	Ton That	Dinh	III Corps	12/07/62	01/05/64
LTG	Tran Thien	Khiem	III Corps	01/05/64	02/02/64
MG	Lam Van	Phat	III Corps	02/02/64	04/04/64
LTG	Tran Ngoc	Tam	III Corps	04/04/64	10/12/64
BG	Cao Van	Vien	III Corps	10/12/64	10/11/65
MG	Nguyen Bao	Tri	III Corps	10/11/65	06/09/66
LTG	Le Nguyen	Khang	III Corps	06/09/66	08/05/68
LTG	Do Cao	Tri*	III Corps	08/05/68	02/23/71
LTG	Nguyen Van	Minh	III Corps	02/23/71	10/29/73
LTG	Pham Quoc	Thuan	III Corps	10/29/73	10/23/74
LTG	Du Quoc	Dong	III Corps	10/23/74	02/01/75
LTG	Nguyen Van	Toan	III Corps	02/01/75	04/30/75

* Killed in a helicopter crash February 23, 1971.

IV Corps
Organized January 1, 1963

MG	Huynh Van	Cao*	IV Corps	01/01/63	11/04/63
MG	Nguyen Huu	Co	IV Corps	11/04/63	03/04/64
MG	Duong Van	Duc**	IV Corps	03/04/64	09/13/64
MG	Nguyen Van	Thieu	IV Corps	09/15/64	01/20/65
LTG	Dang Van	Quang	IV Corps	01/20/65	11/23/66
MG	Nguyen Van	Manh	IV Corps	11/23/66	02/29/68
LTG	Nguyen Duc	Thang	IV Corps	02/29/68	07/01/68
LTG	Nguyen Viet	Thanh***	IV Corps	07/01/68	05/04/70
MG	Ngo	Dzu	IV Corps	05/04/70	08/24/70
LTG	Ngo Quang	Truong	IV Corps	08/24/70	05/04/72
MG	Nguyen Van	Nghi	IV Corps	05/04/72	
MG	Nguyen Khoa	Nam	IV Corps	01/01/74	Suicide

*Relieved in aftermath of November 1, 1963 coup.

**Attempted unsuccessful coup September 13, 1964.

***Killed in a helicopter crash, May 2, 1970.

Part 2

Short Historical Sketches of the Eleven Infantry Divisions,
the Airborne Division and the Marine Division

1st Division
Organized January 1, 1955
(Decree 012-QP/ND of January 17, 1955)
(JGS order 474/TCM/1/1/SQ of January 22, 1955)

The 1st Division was formed from elements of the 21st Mobile Group which was organized on September 1st 1953. The Group was formally disbanded on 15 December 1954. However, the JGS order implementing the decree establishing the division provided for the formation of the staff of the new 21st Infantry Division, as the 1st Division was originally known, from the staff of the former 21st Mobile Group. LTC. Le Van Nghiem, commander of the group, became the first commander of the division.

There is some question as to when the division actually came into being. The authorizing decree established the division--with retroactive active effect--on January 1, 1955 (“Il est **vree** a partir de 1er Janvier 1955 de un division d’infanterie qui porteront les denominations de 21eme, 31eme Divisions d’Infanterie.”) However, the JGS order issued five days later specified that the two divisions--the 31st Infantry Division is now the 7th Division--would come into being with effect from February 1, 1955. It should be noted that the 1st Division calculates January 1 as the anniversary of its founding.

The JGS order of January 22, 1955 is also of interest because gives details on the advisory teams to be attached to the division. The order specified that the commander of the division would have at his disposal a group of French advisers (“un groupe de conseillers Français”) who were to be assigned in a manner consistent with the applicable conventions. A footnote to this section makes the first mention of American advisers to Vietnamese divisions (U.S. adviser would remain with the divisions until early 1973): “Il est **prévu** en outre un conseiller Américain du grade de colonel dont la mise en place sera l’objet d’une note particuliers.”

On August 1, 1955, the 21st infantry division was redesignated and became the 21st Field Division. Another change took place effective November 1, 1955 when the division became the 1st Field Division. 1st January 1959, the present title of 1st Infantry Division was adopted.

The 1st Division is the only one of the four original RVNAF divisions which was formed from units raised in the vicinity of division’s ongoing area of operation. The 21st Mobile Group was formed from battalions native to Thua Thien and Quang Tri provinces, and the 1st Division remains in that area to this day.

Headquartered at Hue from the time of its founding until January 1972, the 1st Division now has its home six kilometers **south** of the city at a former US camp known to Americans troops as Camp Eagle. In the past, the division has at times maintained a forward headquarters. In October 1968, one was set up at Dong Ha, south of the demilitarized zone in Quang Tri provinces. This forward headquarters was closed in 1969 but in February that year another was set up and at Ai Tu, across the Thach Han River from Quang Tri city. This forward headquarters was closed with effect from September 30, 1971 when it was turned over to the newly formed 3rd Division.

Since its formation, the 1st Division has conducted operations in Thua Thien, Quang Tri, and Quang Nam Provinces and also in Lower Laos. At present, the division’s primary responsibility is the defensive of Thua Thien Province and the city of Hue.

Originally, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Infantry Regiments (known as the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd Regiments prior to 1955) were assigned to the division. In September 1958, 54th regiment, formed in mid 1958, joined the 1st Division. On October 1, 1971, the 2nd Regiment was transferred to the new 3rd Division. However divisional strength was brought back to four infantry regiments in late 1972 when the 51st Independent Regiment was formally brought into the division. This regiment, detached from the 25th Division in 1964, had on several previous occasions been placed under the operational control of the 1st Division. Since becoming a part of the 1st Division, the 51st Regiment has continued its history of being frequently placed under the operational control (“opcon”) of other units.

2nd Division
Organized February 1, 1955
(Decree 041-QP/ND of February 10, 1955)
(JGS Orders 1,065/TLM/DEQK/1/5 of January 21, 1955
and 0821/TTM/1/1/SC of February 14, 1955)

The 2nd division is a direct descendant of the 32nd Mobile Group which was formed in North Vietnam on November 3, 1953. Following the Geneva Agreement of July 1954, the group—three battalions, supporting artillery, and its headquarters unit—was transported from Hai Phong to Nha Trang and then to Da Nang. Although it has not been possible to locate the order, it is assumed that 32nd Mobile Group was formally disbanded in December 1954 (two other Mobile Groups the 21st and the 31st were disbanded on December 15, 1954; see the history of the first division for details.)

LTC Ton That Dinh, the commander of the 32nd Mobile Group, became the first commander of the new 32nd Infantry Division which had as its nucleus the headquarters and other units of the old mobile group. A number of other units evacuated from the North were also incorporated in the division. Although the decree authorizing the division specified its founding date as to February 1, 1955, one of the implementing orders fixed January 1, 1955 as the official date LTC Dinh assumed command.

The 32nd Infantry Division was renamed the 32nd Field Division effect August 1, 1955. On November 1, 1955, the 32nd Field Division became the 2nd Field Division. A final change in title was made in January 1959 when the division became the 2nd Infantry Division.

Although the division was initially headquartered at Da Nang, it was soon sent to participate in operation *Giai Phong* (“Liberation”). During operation *Giai Phong* the National Army took control of Southern Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh Provinces (Viet Minh Region 5) in nine territorial stages beginning April 22, 1955 and ending on May 17. (The operation was peaceful and was carried out under Franco-Viet Minh Protocol No. 27 to the Geneva agreement.) For its part, the 32nd Division landed at the Quang Ngai seaport of Sa Huynh and then took control of the area in Binh Dinh from Tam Quan to Phu Cat.

The 2nd Division has normally operated in the Provinces of Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, and Quang Tin (detached from Quang Nam in 1962), although in 1963 the 4th Regiment was sent to the Mekong Delta for several months. In the past, the division’s headquarters alternated between Da Nang and Quang Ngai. Its last move from Da Nang to Quang Ngai in May 1965. However, in early 1972 the headquarters was moved from the Quang Ngai citadel to the former American base camp at Chu Lai in southern Quang Tin Province.

The 4th, 5th, and 6th Infantry Regiments (known as the 32nd, 155th and 31st Regiments prior to November 1955) have been a part of the 2nd Division since 1955. One of the division’s battalions, the 1st of the 6th Regiment is, along with two battalions now in the 21st infantry division, believed to be the oldest identifiable unit in the Vietnamese Armed Forces. Originally known as *bataillon du Vietnam* (BVN) 2, it was formed October 1, 1949 at Thai Binh in North Vietnam.

3rd Division
Organized October 1, 1971
(Decree 2,324-QP/TCYY/ND. of October 31, 1971)
(JGS order 4,511/TTM/P3/2/K of October 4 1971)

The 3rd Division, the newest of the ARVN infantry divisions was formed to guard the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the Republic of Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) following the withdraw of American troops from the area. The division was originally headquartered at a former forward headquarters of the 1st Division at the Ai Tu Base camp across the Thach Han River from Quang Tri City.

The division has scarcely reached full operational status when in late March, April, and May 1972 Communist forces, supported by armor and heavy artillery, launched a full-scale attack against it. The 3rd Division was driven from its position along the DMZ and, ultimately from Quang Tri Province. It was withdrawn to Da Nang for reorganization and refitting.

Since mid-1972, the third division has operated in Quang Nam and Quang Tin Provinces, with the security of the Que Son valley and Da Nang being among its primary responsibilities. Symbolizing the new mission, the divisional insignia was changed October 1, 1972. The original insignia featuring three stars and the words "Ben Hai" (the river passing through the DMZ) was replaced by one showing only the numeral "3". The 3rd Division is currently headquarter on the outskirts of Da Nang in a former U.S. base known to American troops as Freedom Hill.

The infantry regiments of the 3rd Division combine the oldest and newest in the South Vietnamese army. The 2nd Regiment, transferred to 3rd Division from the 1st Division on October 1, 1972, was originally formed as the 22nd Regiment on November 1, 1954. It assumed its present designation in November 1955 and is one of the oldest Regiments in ARVN. The 56th Regiment was activated on December 1, 1971 and was formed from one battalion drawn from the 2nd Regiment, one battalion from the 51st Regiment (then independent), and one entirely new battalion. The 57th Regiment was activated on February 1, 1972 and was formed from one battalion drawn from the 2nd Regiment, one battalion from the 6th Regiment (2nd Division) and another entirely new battalion. Some of the troops brought into the 3rd Division that time were taken from Regional and Popular Forces units in Military Region 1.

5th Division
Organized February 1, 1955
(Decree 040-QP/ND of February 10, 1955)
(JGS Instruction 15,590/TTN/1/1/S of November 22, 1955)

The 5th Division had its origins far away from South Vietnam. During the first Indochina war, the French formed ethnic minority units into an organization known as the Frontier Guard for the Northeast and Northwest of North Viet Nam to patrol the region near the border with China. In the northeastern sector, many of the troops were Nungs, a Chinese-speaking ethnic minority closely related to the Chinese (many Nungs fled China to escape the Communist takeover). The commander in the northeast was himself a Nung, Vong A Sang, who was given the rank of Colonel by the French. In addition to Col. Sang's troops, the French also formed several regular army battalions using Nung personnel.

Following the Geneva Agreement of July 1954, several Nung battalions (the 32, 67, 71, 72, and 75) and other Nung units under Col. Sang were brought to the south. Initially debarked at Ba Ngoi (Cam Ranh) and Nha Trang, the Nungs were soon regrouped at Song Mao in Binh Thuan Province. Organization of a Nung division was ordered taken in hand starting from December 16, 1954. However, it was not until February 1, 1955 that the 6th (or Nung) Division officially came into being with Vong A Sang as its first commander.

On August 1, 1955, the 6th Infantry Division became the 6th Field Division. One month later, on September 9, the 6th Field Division was renumbered and became the 41st Field Division. Effective November 1, 1955, another change was made, and the division became known as the 3rd Field Division. This designation was retained until January 1959 when it became the 5th Infantry Division.

The division did not long remain exclusively a Nung division. President Ngo Dinh Diem soon saw to it that considerable numbers of ethnic Vietnamese officers and enlisted men were brought into the unit. Nevertheless there are to this day a number of Nungs still with the 5th Division.

The headquarters of the 5th Division remained at Song Mao until May 1961 when it moved to Bien Hoa (Bien Hoa had just been vacated by the 7th Division, which moved to My Tho. However, the bulk of the division had already moved to what is now Military Region 3 by the time a headquarters was established at Bien Hoa. By November 1960, the division had two regiments and forward headquarters in what was then the 1st Military Region (now MR 3); only one regiment, the 9th, and a rear headquarters remained at Song Mao.

The 5th division was at Bien Hoa at the time of the November 1, 1963 coup that overthrew President Diem. Troops of the division participated in the coup. Col. Nguyen Van Thieu, Commander of the division, helped direct the assault on President Diem's residence at Gia Long palace.

In July 1964, the division moved to Phu Loi, a few kilometers east of Phu Cuong in Binh Duong Province. In February 1970, another move was made, this time to Lai Khe, a former base camp of the American 1st Infantry Division and before then a rubber research center. Lai Khe is in northern Binh Duong Province about five kilometers north of Ben Cat district on National Highway 13.

The 7th, 8th, and 9th Infantry Regiments (known as the 34th, 35th, and 38th Regiments prior to November 1955) had been assigned to the division about the time it was formed. The 5th Division has for many years operated in the northern provinces of MR 3. In 1970-71, it also conducted operations in adjacent areas of Cambodia.

7th Division
Organized January 1, 1955
(Decree 012-QP/ND of January 17, 1955)
(JGS Order 474/TTM/1/1/SQ of January 22, 1955)

The history of 7th Division begins with the French Union forces' 7th Mobile Group which was later designated the 2nd Mobile Group (Lien Bien Luc Dong 2). On September 1, 1952 the unit became the 31st Mobile Group (Lien Bien Luc Dong 31). It was one of two Vietnamese something mobile groups formed in the Red River Delta area of North Viet Nam (the other was the 32nd Mobile Group). Following the July 1954 Geneva agreements the 31st Mobile Group was embarking from Hai Phong and brought south to Da Nang in Central Viet Nam. The group was officially disbanded on December 15, 1954.

With effect from January 1, 1955, a 31st Infantry Division was formed from elements of the former 31st Mobile Group. Lt. Colonel Nguyen Huu Co, last commander of the group, became the first commander of the division. Details on the founding of the new division are complex. A condensed version of these beginnings is found in the history of the 1st Division which was formed under the same decree and JCS order.

The division was for a time based at Tma Ky (then Qunag Nam, now Quang Tin Province.) Between April 22 and March 17, 1955, the division participated in operation Giai Phong ("Liberation") during which the national army took control of Southern Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh (Viet Minh Region 5) in accordance with a French-Viet Minh protocol. Since the 31st division that only one regiment at the time (the 156th Regiment), it was temporarily reinforced by a one from the 32nd Division (now the 2nd Division).

During the summer of 1955, the 31st Division was transferred from Central Vietnam to the South. On August 1, 1955, the 31st Infantry Division became the 31st Field Division. A few weeks later, it was redesignated the 11th Field Division. Then, on November 1, 1955, the 11th Field Division became the 4th Field Division. A new headquarters was established at Bien Hoa effective November 11, 1955. The division brought only its headquarters staff and a few specialized units to the South. Three infantry regiment—the 51st, 52nd, and 154th all formed December 1, 1954 from battalions evacuated from the north—joined the division when it reached the South. The 51st, 52nd, and 154th Regiment's became the 10th, 17th, and 12th regiments on November 1, 1955. They remain with the division.

In early 1956, all three regiments of the 4th Division were used in operations against the forces of Hoa Hao dissident leader General Ba Cut (Le Quang Vinh) in an area which is now part of Chau Duc province.

In January 1959, the 4th Field Division was redesignated the 7th Infantry Division. The headquarters was moved to My Tho on May 20, 1961. (The 5th Infantry Division moved the[ir] headquarters to Bien Hoa during the same month.) This completed the movement of the 7th Division into the Mekong Delta. However, as early as November 1960 the 10th Regiment was already engaged in operations there (it was in Soc Trang).

On September 1, 1969 headquarters was moved again, this time to Dong Tam eight kilometers west of My Tho on the northernmost branch of the Mekong River. Dong Tam is a former base camp of the U.S. 9th Infantry Division. Since its move to My Tho in 1961, the division as conducted operations in the provinces of Dinh Tuong, Long An, Kien Tuong, Kien Hoa, Go Cong, Ha Duc, Vinh Long, Vinh Binh, Phong Dinh and An Giang and also across the Cambodian border 1971-72.

9th Division
Organized January 1, 1962
(Decree 004-QP/ND of January 2, 1962)
(JGS Order 1,637/TTM/1/1/K of December 9, 1961)

The 9th Division was one of the two ARVN infantry divisions—the other was the 21st division—formed in 1962 as part of a program to increase regular army strength by 30,000 men. The division was entirely new and went through an organization and training phase that was completed on August 16, 1962.

Although the 9th Division has had a long association with the Mekong Delta, it did not originate there. The first headquarters of the division was at Phu Thanh in Binh Dinh Province. Phu Thanh is located on National Highway 1 just south of the turn off for Qui Nhon, which is about 15 kilometers away. Manpower for the new division was originally drawn from other army units as well as from training schools and centers.

The first of the division's infantry regiments to be formed was the 15th which was activated on March 5, 1962 and received its training at the Duc My Center in Khanh Hoa Province. The 14th Regiment, activated April 2, 1962 and the 13th Regiment, activated May 7, 1962, received their initial training at the division's own training center at Phu Thanh. Originally, the 13th Regiment was stationed at Phu Thanh, the 14th at Phu Cat, about 30 kilometers to the north, and the 15th at Tuy Hoa in Phu Yen Province. The division's area responsibility—the then 21st Tactical Zone—at first included the Binh Dinh and Phu Yen Provinces. In January 1963, Phu Bon Province (created in September 1962) was added.

The worsening security situation in the Mekong Delta resulted in September 1963 in the transfer of the 9th Division to the South. On September 28th, the divisional headquarters was established at Sa Dec, then part of Vinh Long Province. In the same month, the 14th and 15th Regiments were brought south by ship and airplane and deployed in Vinh Binh and Kien Hoa Provinces. The 13th Regiment followed in early October and was initially sent to Kien Giang.

During the November 1963 coup, elements of the 9th Division might have gone to the aid of President Diem had it not been for the actions of Col. Nguyen Huu Co who took command of the 7th Division in My Tho and ordered all ferries tied up on the north side of the Mekong to prevent the 9th division from crossing. Col. Bui Dinh was relieved of command of the division six days later.

Since 1963, the 9th Division has conducted operations in nearly all provinces of what is now Military Region IV. In 1969, the division became a mobile force for IV Corps with elements being sent to Delta trouble spots ranging from Kien Giang to Dinh Tuong. In April 1970, 9th Division troops crossed into Cambodia in the first of series of intermittent cross-border operations that took place during the 1970-72 period. In mid 1972, the 15th regiment was sent to Military Region 3 to participate in an unsuccessful attempt to reopen National Highway 13th to the surrounded Binh Long Province headquarters town of An Loc. It returned to the Delta after a relatively short time.

The headquarters of the 9th Division was moved from Sa Dec to former American facilities at Vinh Long airfield (on the western edge of Vinh Long town) on April 5, 1972.

On March 1, 1967, the 13th Regiment, in the move designed to rid it of the bad luck associated with the number "13" became the 16th Regiment.

18th Division
Organized May 16, 1965
(Decree 486-QP/ND of August 5, 1965)
(JGS Order 1,133/TTM/P3/4 QC/K of May 18, 1965)

Known as the 10th division when it was established 1965, the 18th division brought three already existing independent regiments under a single command. The regiments ceased their independent functions on May 16th, 1965, the date the division was provisionally organized “while awaiting promulgation of the decree”, which did not occur until August of that year.

The headquarters of the division was established at Xuan Loc, 70 kilometers east of Saigon and the provincial town in Long Khanh province. It remains there, although the division has in addition sometimes maintained light command posts such as one currently located at the former U.S. advisory headquarters for III Corps adjacent to Long Binh base. When the division was organized the 43rd Regiment was in Long Khanh Province, the 48th Regiment was at Tan Uyen, 15 kilometers north of Bien Hoa, and the 52nd Regiment was at Ba Ria in Phuoc Tuy Province (one battalion was on guard duty at Ton Son Nhut Airport, Saigon).

The three regiments have histories reaching back to 1955. The 43rd regiment officially came into being on August 1, 1955. It was activated at Ninh Hoa, 33 kilometers north of Nha Trang in Khanh Hoa Province. Known then as the 404th Regiment of the 5th Light Division, it subsequently became the 43rd regiment of the 23rd division as the result of several changes in designation (see history of the 23rd Division). On November 1, 1963 adjustments in corps assignments and corps tactical zone boundaries were made. The 23rd Division was reassigned to II Corps, the 43rd Regiment remained with III Corps as an independent regiment; its area of responsibility in Long Khan and Binh Thuy remained part of the III Corps Tactical Zone.

Although a 48th regiment was formed in August 1955 as part of the later disbanded 16th Light Division in Quang Tri, the present 48th Regiment has no relationship—except in designation—to the earlier unit. It is actually the former 32nd Regiment of the 21st Division within a new number. As of early 1961, the 32nd Regiment was in Tay Ninh, and it may still have been there in early 1963. Meanwhile on March 16, 1963 a new 48th Regiment had been formed as an independent unit, apparently in Ba Xuyen in the Mekong Delta. A decision appears to have been made to locate the entire 21st Division in the Delta, and the easiest way to accomplish this was to have the two regiments exchange designations. It was done by a Defense Ministry decree dated February 14, 1963 (see history of the 21st Division for further background).

The 52nd regiment was originally the 135th Regional Forces Regiment. It was formed on August 1, 1955 to serve in the Saigon area of the old 1st Military Region (present-day Military Regions 3 and 4). The regiment, headquartered near the Gia Dinh provincial offices just outside of Saigon, was primarily a service unit providing sentries, drivers and similar types of personnel to military installations and commands in the Saigon area. At some time prior to 1963, it was upgraded to main-force status and designated the 52nd Infantry regiment.

On January 1, 1967, the 10th Infantry Division became the 18th Infantry Division. The change was made because of the unfavorable connotations of the expression “number ten”.

Eastern MR 3 is the 18th Division’s primary area of responsibility. However, the division has on occasion served in other parts of the region. For a period during mid-1972, the 18th Division was deployed to the surrounded Binh Long Province Headquarters town of An Loc.

21st Division
Organized June 1, 1959

The 21st Division is one of three infantry divisions formed in 1959 as part of a plan to eliminate separate categories of “light” and “heavy” divisions and replace them with standard infantry divisions. The 21st Division was created from the 11th and 13th Light Divisions. Strictly speaking, it is a descendent of the 11th Light Division since the present regimental designations (31st, 32nd and 33rd) had been retained from that division.

On August 1, 1955, 6 light divisions officially came into being with regiments composed of already existing battalions. The first light division was initially headquartered at Long Xuyen. After a short while, the headquarters was moved to Sa Dec. On November 1, 1955, 1st Light Division became the 11th Light Division, and the 11th, 101st, and 102nd Regiments became the 31st, 32nd, and 33rd regiments. The 11th (31st after November 1) Regiment predated the division and the other regiments. It was formed on November 1, 1954 from 3 battalions of the Vietnamese National Army: BVN 1, BVN 3, and BVN 11. BVNs 1 and 3 were formed October 1, 1949 at Bac Lieu and Rach Gia respectively. Along with BVN 2, formed on the same date at Thai Binh in North Vietnam, they would appear to be the oldest identifiable main force units in RVNAF. BVN's 1 and 3 are now the 1/31 and 2/31 battalions of the 31st Regiment (BVN 2 is now the 1/6 Battalions with the 2nd Division.

The earliest combat the 11th Light Division was involved in was against Hoa Hao dissidents in the Mekong on Delta. Division elements fought the forces of various Hoa Hao “generals” in several areas. By early 1956, the Hoa Hao dissidents threat to the national government had been eliminated.

The 3rd Light Division was formed at Tu Dau Mot (now known as Phu Cuong and the headquarters town for Binh Duong Province. Soon afterwards, it was shifted to Tay Ninh and established itself in the former headquarters of the Cao Dai armed forces at Ben Keo, on National Highway 22 a few Kilometers south of Tay Ninh City. On November 1, 1955, the 3rd Light Division became the 13th Light Division and the 15th, 12th, and 106th Regiments became the 37th, 38th, and 39th Regiments. The 37th and 38th Regiments were composed of battalions raised in present-day MR 3; the 39th regiment was made up of battalions from My Tho and Sa Dec in the Delta. The 39th Regiment participated in the successful campaigns against Hoa Hao dissidents in 1955-56

Planning for the formation of the 21st Infantry Division began in 1958. A complex series of reorganization instructions resulted. The 13th Light Division was disbanded as were the 37th, 38th, and 39th regiments. Although the 11th Light Division also ceased to exist, its commander became the first commander of the 21st Division, and its headquarters can became the main headquarters of the new infantry division, and its three regiments 31st, 32nd, and 33rd were retained. However, the old 13th Light Division headquarters in Tay Ninh was made the rear headquarters of 21st Division and troop dispositions and designations were realigned so as to place the 32nd regiment in Tay Ninh with this headquarters.

By late 1960, 21st Division units were spread out from Tay Ninh (32nd Regiment) to Ca Mau (31st Regiment) with troops also operating in the Kien Tuong-Kien Phong area (33rd Regiment) and in Long An Province. These troop dispositions proved advantageous to division commander Col. Tran Thien Kiem when he moved in support of President Diem to help put down Col. Nguyen Chanh Thi's November 11, 1960 Airborne coup attempt, but they undoubtedly made command and control of the division difficult. It was eventually decided to concentrate the entire division in the Mekong Delta. Meanwhile, on March 16, 1961, a 48th Regiment had been activated, apparently at Ba Xuyen in the Delta. (it was an upgraded regional forces regiment). A Defense Ministry decree of February 14, 1963 redesignated the 48th Regiment the 32nd Regiment of the 21st Division while the former 32nd Regiment became the 48th Independent Regiment. The new 48th Regiment (ex-32nd) is now part of the 18th Division.

The 21st Division has for many years been concentrated in the southern part of the Mekong

Delta. In late 1970, a forward headquarters was set up at Ca Mau, the southernmost town of any consequence in Vietnam, in connection with the division's 1970-71 U Minh Forest campaign. However the division's rear headquarters remained at Bac Lieu. It is believed that the Sa Dec headquarters was closed prior to the arrival of the 9th Division headquarters at Sa Dec in September 1963. In April 1972, the entire 21st Division was brought up to Binh Duong Province in MR 3 to join in unsuccessful attempts to reopen National Highway 13th to An Loc. It returned to the Delta three months later. In 1973, the division opened a field headquarters at Vi Thanh, the Chuong Thien Province seat, and it has conducted operations in the area since that time.

22nd Division
Organized April 1, 1959
(JGS Order 5,116/TTM/1/1/MK of December 12, 1959)
(JGS Order 1,029/TTM/1/1/MK of February 28, 1959)

The 22nd Division is one of the three infantry divisions formed in 1959 as part of plan to eliminate separate categories of “light” and “field” divisions and replace them with standard infantry division. The 22nd Division was created from the 12th and 14th Light Divisions. Strictly speaking, it is a descendant of the 14th Light Division.

On August 1, 1955, six light divisions officially came into being with regiments composed of relatively of already existing battalions. The 2nd Light Division was formed with its headquarters at Kontum in the central highlands. However, eight of the nine battalions included in the division’s three regiments—the 103rd, 104th and 105th—were originally raised in the Mekong Delta. On November 1, 1955, the 2nd Light Division became the 12th Light Division, and the 103rd, 104th and 105th Regiments were renumbered the 34th, 35th, and 36th Regiments. The division and its regiments were disbanded in 1959. Division personnel were incorporated in the new 22nd Division.

The 4th Light Division was also formed on August 1, 1955. Its first headquarters was at Ban Me Thuot in Darlac Province, but after a short period the headquarters was transferred to the coastal city of Qui Nhon. Almost all the troops in the division were originally Highlanders. On November 1, 1955, the 4th Light Division was renumbered the 14th Light Division and its regiments—the 401st, 402nd, and 403rd—became the 40th, 41st, and 42nd Regiments. In early 1956, the division participated in successful operations in the Mekong Delta which eliminated the military forces of “General” Ba Cut (Le Quang Vinh) and other dissident Hoa Hao leaders.

Planning for the establishment of the 22nd Infantry Division began in 1958. As of early 1959, the 14th Light Division had its headquarters and its 41st Regiment at Kontum. The 40th Regiment was at Dak To, 45 kilometers north of Kontum, while the 42nd Regiment was at Phu Thanh, 15 kilometers west of Qui Nhon on National Highway 1. On March 31, 1959 the 12th Light Division ceased to exist, and the following day the 14th Light Division became the 22nd Infantry Division.

In November 1960, the division was assigned responsibility for Kontum and Pleiku Provinces. The headquarters remained in Kontum. Because of the changing military situation, the division was shifted to the coast in March 1965 and given responsibility for Binh Dinh, Phu Yen and Phu Bon Provinces. The headquarters was moved to Ba Gi, 15 kilometers northwest of Qui Nhon in Binh Dinh.

In 1966, the 47th Independent Regiment joined the division. This regiment appears to have been formed in the early 1960s (an earlier 47th Regiment, a part of the 16th Light Division in Quang Tri, was organized on November 1, 1954 and disbanded on March 31, 1959). In April 1962, the 47th Regiment was operating in Phu Yen in support of the 9th Division; in April 1963, part of the regiment was in Quang Ngai operating in support of the 25th Division. On November 1, 1963, the 47th Regiment joined the 23rd Division. It became independent again on October 16, 1965. It soon joined the 22nd Division where it remains.

In late 1965, the 42nd Regiment left 22nd Division and joined the 23rd Division. However, it was made independent on July 1, 1966 and assigned to the newly created 24th Special Tactical Zone (Kontum Province area). The Zone was abolished on April 30, 1970, and the following day the 42nd Regiment rejoined the 22nd Division. Simultaneously, a forward headquarters for the division was set up at Tan Canh/Dak To in Kontum Province.

In early 1972 the division had two regiments (the 42nd and the 47th) in the Pleiku/Kontum area and two regiments (the 40th and 41st) in Binh Dinh. Because of sharp reverses during the 1972 Communist offensive—the division’s forward headquarters at Tan Canh was overrun and the division commanded disappeared in the fighting—two regiments in the highlands were withdrawn to Binh Dinh for refitting along with two regiments already in the province, both of which had also suffered some serious setbacks in 1972. Later in the year, the rehabilitated 22nd Division

reopened the National Highway 1 Corridor through northern Binh Dinh. In early 1973, all four regiments were in Binh Dinh. However, by the end of the year all of them had been redeployed to the Kontum/Pleiku area.

Since early 1973, 22nd Division has had its rear headquarters at An Son, a former Korean base camp about 15 kilometers west of Qui Nhon.

23rd Division
Organized April 1, 1959
(JGS Order 5,116/TTM/1/1/MK of December 12, 1959)
(JGS Order 1,029/TTM/1/1/MK of February 28, 1959)

The 23rd Infantry Division is the successor of the former 15th Light Division which was known as the 5th Light Division when it was formed on August 1, 1955 with its headquarters at Nha Trang. Three new regiments—the 404th (formed at Ninh Hoa), 405th (formed at Tuy Hoa), and the 406th (Formed at Ninh Hoa)—were organized at the same time and included in the division. With one exception, the constituent battalions were all raised in the southern part of Central Vietnam.

On November 1, 1955, the 5th Light Division was redesignated the 15th Light Division and the 404th, 405th, and 406th Regiments became the 43rd, 44th, and 45th Infantry Regiments. From January to May 1956, the division participated in the “Nguyen Hue” Campaign in the Mekong Delta which eliminated armed units belonging to dissident factions of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religious sects. The 15th Light Division operated in the Dong Thap Muoi area (present-day Kien Tuong and Kien Phong Provinces) and quickly brought Hoa Hao faction leader Tran Van Soai to terms and then broke up bands of Cao Dai irregulars before turning attention to miscellaneous Viet Minh and other disruptive elements in the vicinity of the border with Cambodia. Units of the division also operated in Tay Ninh and what area today Long An, Hau Nghia, and An Giang Provinces.

After completing operations in the Delta, the division returned to Central Vietnam. On August 14, 1956, the headquarters of the division was moved from Nha Trang to Duc My, now a major RVNAF training area, located in Khanh Hoa Province on National Highway 21 connecting Ninh Hoa with Ban Me Thuot.

During the first half of 1959, the Vietnamese army was reorganized. On April 1, 1956, the 15th Light Division became the 23rd Infantry Division. Subordinate units were strengthened and support units were added as part of the change. In late 1960, the division began its move from Duc My up to Ban Me Thuot, Darlac Province. The permanent headquarters of the division was officially moved to Ban Ma Thuot in June 1961 and it remains there.

The division became part of II Corps when the latter was formed on October 1, 1957. However, in a reorganization that took place in December 1962, the division became part of III Corps with Binh Tuy Province being added to its area of responsibility (Binh Thuan, Ninh Thuan, Tuyen Duc Darlac, Quang Duc, Lam Dong and Khanh Hoa Provinces.) On November 1, 1963, another reorganization took place and the 23rd Division was returned to II Corps control.

Several changes in infantry regiments took place during the mid-1960s. On November 1, 1963, the 43rd Regiment was detached from the division, made independent, and assigned to III Corps (it was incorporated in the new 18th --then the 10th Division--in 1965.) At the same time, the 47th Independent Regiment was brought into the 23rd Division.

On October 16, 1963, the 47th Regiment again became independent (it joined the 22nd Division not long afterwards) and was replaced by the 42nd Regiment from the 22nd Division. However, on July 1, 1966, the 42nd Regiment was made independent and left the division (it rejoined the 22nd Division in 1970). The 53rd Regiment, the division's newest, was activated on August 1, 1968 in Ninh Thuan Province.

From 1958 to 1969, elements of the division conducted operations in the coastal provinces from Binh Tuy to Quang Ngai and also in the Central Highlands. Some units have been in combat a considerable distance from their normal areas of operation. From September 1958 to January 1959, part of the division was in the northern part of what is now Military Region 3. From July to September 1959, one regiment (the 44th) was in Tay Ninh, while from July to October 1959 another (the 45th) was in the U Minh Forest in the Southern Mekong Delta.

In May 1970, part of the division crossed into Cambodia as part of a large scale operation by American and South Vietnamese forces to disrupt Communist base area previously immune to

large-scale ground assault. Two years later, in May 1972, the 23rd Division was rushed to the Kontum/Pleiku area following a serious setback in Northern Kontum to the 22nd Division. The 23rd Division successfully defended the town of Kontum and remained in the Kontum/Pleiku area until late 1973 when it moved back to the southern part of the Highlands.

25th Division
Organized July 1, 1962
(Decree 601-OP/ND of April 9, 1962)
(JGS Order 624/TTM/1/1/K of April 16, 1962)

The 25th Division was one of the two ARVN divisions--the other was the 9th Division formed in 1962 as part of a program to increase regular army strength by 30,000 men. The division was entirely new and went through an organization and training phase which was completed on April 1, 1963.

The 25th Division has operated in the area west and south of Saigon for many years. However, it was originally formed in Quang Ngai Province in Central Viet Nam. The first headquarters of the division was at Thuan Hoa, south of the Tra Khuc River and ten kilometers west of Quang Ngai City.

Three new infantry regiments were formed with the division. The 49th Regiment was initially located at the Thuan Hoa headquarters. The 50th Regiment was formed at Duc Pho, 40 kilometers south of Quang Ngai City on National Highway 1. The 51st Regiment was formed at Ba Gia, on Provincial Highway 5 about 20 kilometers northwest of Quang Ngai City. Activation dates of the regiments are not available.

The 25th Division operated in Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh Provinces following the completion of training. Until November 1963 both provinces were part of II Corps Tactical Zone. In that month, Quang Ngai was transferred to the I Corps Tactical Zone.

Because of the need for additional troops in the Saigon area, the 25th Division on April 8, 1964 received orders to move to the South. The official date of transfer was October 8, 1964. A new headquarters was set up at Cay Diep, near the Quang Trung Training Center west of Saigon on National Highway 1 in Gia Dinh Province. The division has been a part of III Corps since that time.

Only the 49th and 50th Regiments came to the South. The 51st Regiment left the division and remained in Central Viet Nam as an independent unit (it is now part of the 1st Division). To replace the 51st Regiment, the 46th Independent Regiment was brought into the division. This regiment was originally a regional forces regiment, one of eight formed in the old 1st Military Region (present-day Military Region's 3 and 4) on August 1, 1955. It is believed to have been upgraded to regular Army status in the early 1960s.

The headquarters of the 25th Division has moved twice since first being established in the South. On December 23, 1964, it was moved to the Duc Hue District in Hau Nghia Province. Almost six years later, on December 13, 1970, headquarters was transferred to a large base camp at Cu Chi, also in Hau Nghia, previously occupied by the U.S. 25th Infantry Division. The division also maintains a semi-permanent command post at another former American base, Tay Ninh West, a few kilometers west of Tay Ninh City.

The Western tier of provinces of Military Region 3 has been the 25th Division's general area of responsibility since coming to the south in 1964. The division also operates in Binh Duong Province on occasion. In mid-1972, the division participated in an attempt to reopen National Highway 13 to the Binh Long Province headquarters town of An Loc.

In April 1970, elements of the 25th Division crossed into Cambodia as part of a coordinated South Vietnamese-American effort to eliminate Communist cross-border areas. Units of the division entered the "Parrot's Beak" area and advanced down Highway 1 through the town of Svay Rieng to Kampong Trabek. Other division elements operated in the area of the French rubber plantations at Krek and Chup. Operations in Cambodia continued until late 1971.

Although the majority of the officers and men now with the 25th Division are from the South, there are still personnel with division who have been in it since it was formed in Central Viet Nam in 1962.

Airborne Division
Organized May 1, 1955

The history of the Airborne Division goes back to August 1, 1951 when the 1st Airborne Battalion was formed by the French from Vietnamese elements of T.A.P.I. (Troupes Aéroportées en Indochine). Five airborne battalions (1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th, and 7th were formed during the French era. The best-known was the 5th Battalion which was almost completely wiped out in 1954 when it parachuted into Dien Bien Phu and suffered the same fate as the rest of the French garrison.

On May 1, 1954 French formed G.A.P.3 (Groupement Aéroport 3). It was an outgrowth of T.A.P.I.. Major Do Cao Tri, then an airborne battalion commander was chosen to command the group. (Reportedly Lt. Colonel Nguyen Khanh was the first choice of the French, but he was not available for the assignment.) The organization of the G.A.P.3 commanded by a Vietnamese officer, may be considered the beginning of the present Airborne Division, although May 1, 1955 (see below) is usually cited as the division's official founding date.

Following the July 1954 Geneva Agreement, the headquarters of G.A.P.3 and the three airborne battalions in the North (the 3rd, 5th, and 7th moved to the South. On March 11, 1955, the 7th Battalion, which had been formed at Ha Dong on September 1, 1953, was disbanded (a new 7th Battalion was activated in 1961—see below). This left four airborne battalions. An Airborne Group with headquarters, support units, and a training center, officially came into being on May 1, 1955 at Ton Son Nhut Airport on the edge of Saigon. Lt. Colonel Do Cao Tri, the commander of the former G.A.P.3, had already (as of March 1, 1955) been made commander of airborne troops. On June 4, 1955, the headquarters of the 3rd and 5th battalions were transferred from Nha Trang to Tan Son Nhut. (Comment: there are several aspects of the 1954-55 airborne history which remained unclear.)

On December 1, 1959, the Airborne Group was redesignated the Airborne Brigade. On December 1, 1965, the Brigade became the Airborne Division with eight maneuver battalions divided into three Task Forces (1st, 2nd, and 35th). An artillery battalion was activated at that time (two more have since been added).

The Airborne Division is currently subdivided into three brigades (1st, 2nd, and 3rd) which were created on May 1, 1968 from the three already existing Task Forces. The 1st, 5th, and 9th Battalions are assigned to the 1st Brigade; the 5th, 7th, and 11th Battalions, to the 2nd Brigade; and the 2nd, 3rd, and 6th Battalions to the 3rd Brigade. In the field, battalions are frequently placed under the operational control of brigades other than their parent brigade.

The Airborne Division's nine maneuver battalions were activated on the following dates and at the following locations:

1 st Battalion	August 1, 1951	(at Saigon)
2 nd Battalion	September 1, 1965	(at Saigon)
3 rd Battalion	September 1, 1952	(at Hanoi)
5 th Battalion	September 1, 1953	(at Hanoi)
6 th Battalion	March 1, 1954	(at Saigon)
7 th Battalion	November 1, 1961	(at Saigon)
8 th Battalion	March 1, 1959	(at Saigon)
9 th Battalion	September 1, 1965	(at Saigon)
11 th Battalion	December 1, 1967	(at Saigon)

The Airborne Division forms, along with the Marine division, the RVNAF general reserve which is under the control of the Joint General Staff. An elite unit with a proud combat record, the division has at one time or another fought in virtually every part of South Vietnam as well as in Cambodia (1970-71) and Laos (1971). Since mid-1972, the division has been deployed in the northern part of MR 1 and maintains a forward headquarters there. The Airborne Division relies entirely on volunteers to fill its ranks and trains its men had its Ton Son Nhut headquarters.

The Airborne Division has been a continuing source of officers who have been named to command infantry units and who often come to be well-known. A partial list includes: Lt. Gen-

eral Do Cao Tri, commander of the Airborne Group 1955-56, who commanded the 1st Division in 1963, I Corps in 1963, II Corps 1963-64, and III Corps 1968-71 (when he was killed in a helicopter crash); Lt. General (Ret.) Nguyen Chanh Thi, commander of the Airborne Brigade 1956-1960, who commanded the 1st Division in 1964 and then I Corps 1964-66; Lt. General Ngo Quang Trung, Airborne Chief of Staff and Deputy Division Commander 1965-66, named 1st Division Commander in 1966, IV Corps Commander in 1970 and I Corps Commander in 1972; Maj. General Nguyen Khao Nam, a former Airborne Brigade Commander who has led the 7th Division since 1970; Brigadier General Tran Quoc Lich, another former Brigade Commander, who commanded the 5th Division 1972-73; Brigadier General Ho Truong Hau, a former Deputy Airborne Commander, who led the 21st Division during part of 1972; Brigadier General Truong Quang An, killed in action while Commander of the 23rd division in 1966; and Brigadier General Do Ke Giai, commander of the 18th Division in 1966-69 and Chief of the Ranger Command since 1972.

Marine Division
Organized October 1, 1954
Decree 991-QP/ND of October 13, 1954

The Marine division is descended from French organized commando companies and river patrol units. Two battalions of troops (1st and 2nd Bataillons de Marche) which the French had formed from commando companies in the North and South, respectively, were transferred to the control of the Armed Forces of the then State of Vietnam on January 1, 1954. (The original elements were commando companies 1, 2, 3, 7, 13, 17, 24, 63, Commando Vendeberg, and Commando Nam Dinh) Following the July 1954 Geneva agreement, the 1st Battalion moved to the South.

On October 1, 1954, the Viet Nam Marine Corps (VNMC) was formally created as part of Vietnam's Navy. Organizational work was completed in early 1955. At that time, the VNMC included one landing battalion, six riverboat companies, five combat support light infantry companies, one raiding party, and headquarters and training units. The landing battalion was under the command of a French officer until May 31, 1955. The 1955 strength of the Marine Corps was slightly over 1,100 officers and men.

The VNMC was reorganized on February 1, 1956. On April 16, 1956, the combat elements of the corps was designated the Marine Group (it had previously been known as the Marine infantry). The VNMC became part of the general reserve of South Vietnamese armed forces on August 1, 1961. On January 1, 1962, the Marine Group was redesignated the Marine Brigade. The present Marine Division officially came into being on October 1, 1968.

The Marine division is at present composed of nine maneuver battalions, the three artillery battalions, and various support elements. Activation dates for the maneuver battalions follow:

1 st Battalion	October 1, 1954
2 nd Battalion	April 1, 1956
3 rd Battalion	September 1, 1959
4 th Battalion	September 1, 1961
5 th Battalion	August 1, 1964
6 th Battalion	July 1, 1966
7 th Battalion	January 1, 1970
8 th Battalion	February 1, 1970
9 th Battalion	April 1, 1970

On July 1, 1964, two task forces, "A" and "B", were established within the then Marine Brigade. On July 1, 1968 or three months before the Marine Brigade officially became the Marine Division, Task Force "A" became Brigade "A" and Task Force "B" became to Brigade "B". Another change in unit designations took place on July 1, 1970. Brigade "A" became the 147th Brigade (1st, 2nd, and 3rd Battalions), and Brigade "B" became the 258th Brigade (4th, 5th, and 6th Battalions). At this time, a third, newly formed brigade, which had been activated on June 1 1970, was designated to the 369th Brigade (7th, 8th, and 9th Battalions)

The VNMC which is composed entirely of volunteers has seen action in all parts of the Republic of Vietnam and also in Cambodia (1970-71) and Laos (1971). In the field, Marine battalions are frequently placed under the operational control of brigades other than their parent Brigade.

At the present time, the Viet Nam Marine Corps (which consists almost entirely of the personnel of the Marine division) is officially a component of the South Vietnamese Navy. However, the Navy has no Marine Corps-related responsibilities, and the VNMC is under the direct operational control of the Joint General Staff. The Marine Division remains part of the RVNAF general reserve along with the Airborne Division. The headquarters of the Marine division/VNMC (the commander of the division is the commandant of the corps) is located in downtown Saigon close to the headquarters of the Navy. A number of facilities of the division are located in the Saigon area.

The Marine Division is currently deployed in Quang Tri province. It has operated in northern MR 1 since the Communist Spring Offensive of 1972 and maintains a forward headquarters in Quang Tri. Marine units recaptured Quang Tri City on September 16, 1972 after its abandonment by ARVN troops in May 1972.

Supplemental Unit Historical Information

(This material was not included in the original study, but is included for the TTU conference.)

16th Light Division.

Six light divisions, numbered 1-6, were created in early August 1955. The official document was Defense Ministry Decision 612 of August 8, 1955. It included the 201st, 156th, and 203rd infantry regiments. Then, by Joint General Staff order dated September 17, 1955, the numbering system for all main force units down to battalion level was changed. The 6th Light Div. became the 16th Light Division. Finally, in late 1958, the 16th Light Division was dissolved ("giai tan," in Vietnamese) as part of a major reorganization.

The 6 or 16th Light Division (Su Doan Kinh Chien) was in Quang Tri Province according to my info.

Jim Nach

Vietnamese Air Force
(from the MACV Command History 1969 as collected by Carr's Compendiums)

(S) At the beginning of 1969 the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) had five air wings with 19 subordinate flying squadrons. One of the wings was located in each of the Corps Tactical Zones (CTZ) with the exception of III CTZ which had two wings (See Figure VI-2). The VNAF was organized as shown in Figure VI-3.

(S) The major 1969 VNAF goals were:

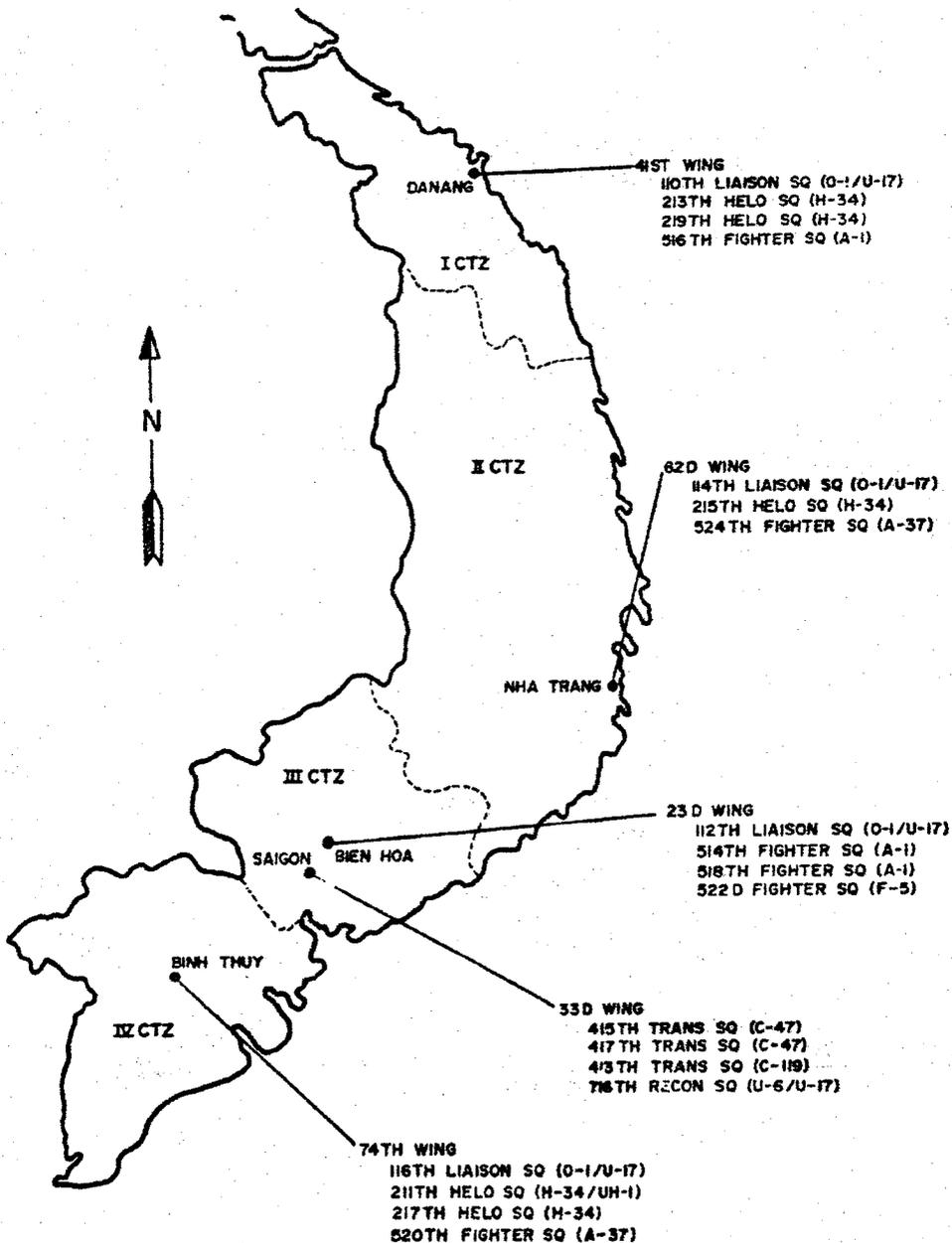
1. Convert four helicopter squadrons (CH-34s) to UH-1Hs.
2. Convert three fighter squadrons (A-1) to A-37 aircraft.
3. Convert one transport squadron (C-47) to a combat squadron (AC-47).
4. Activate a Special Air Mission squadron (SAM) at Tan Son Nhut.
5. Program and train pilots and maintenance personnel (both in-country and offshore for the expansion and activation of VNAF units in FY 71-74 (See 1968 MACV Command History, Vol 1, pp 337-341 for VNAF units concerned).

Special Air Mission Squadron

(S) On 25 Mar, the Chief of the Air Force Advisory Group (AFGP) advised MACV that an excessive number of VNAF combat aircraft, particularly the UH-1 were being used for VIP support of GVN officials. He recommended that VNAF VIP support be limited to the proposed 40 Special Air Mission (SAM) squadron and that the SAM squadron UE be reviewed for sufficiency. He also requested early approval of the UE and activation of the squadron. It was determined that all aircraft and equipment for the VNAF SAM squadron had been requested in January and February. Evaluation of the UE for the squadrons indicated no change was required, and on 22 Apr, CofS, MACV informed AFGP that it supported the SAM squadron UE as approved and requested that VNAF be advised to activate the VNAF SAM squadron at the earliest practicable date.³⁹

(C) On 30 Jun, the 314th VNAF SAM Sqdn was activated at Tan Son Nhut Airbase and had in its inventory four UH-1H helicopters, two U-17s, and five VC-47s. Its mission was to provide in-country and out-of-country air transportation for designated VIPs.⁴⁰

Note: VNAF units and locations as of the end of the year are shown on Figure VI-4.



Vietnamese Navy (U)

The Vietnamese Navy (VNN) had been organized in 1954 when the French relinquished their control of the country to the Vietnamese. The French Navy had left the VNN with 14 ships, 6 Dinassauts (River Assault Groups), and a small cadre of well trained Vietnamese officers and petty officers. In 1955 USN advisors had been assigned to assist in the development of the VNN. This effort had expanded as the VNN had embarked on a full scale insurgency. To counter sea infiltration of arms and men from the north, the VNN reestablished the sea anti-infiltration force concept used by the French. A fleet of ten sail-only junks had been formed and assigned to operate in the area of the 17th parallel. It had been manned by paramilitary personnel. By 1961 the VNN had a force of 23 ships, the largest of which were LSMs, 197 boats, and a personnel strength of 5,000 men. Morale had been high, but the VNN forces had not been sufficient to counter the growing enemy infiltration threat. Additional assets had been requested from the US. The years 1962-1964 had marked a rapid expansion of the VNN. Training facilities, repair bases, and logistics support facilities had been established; communications equipment and networks had been improved; and organization and administrative procedures were strengthened. The number of ships had increased to 44 and the personnel strength to 8,100. By the end of 1965 the VNN had almost doubled its 1964 personnel strength. This was in part, the result of having integrated the paramilitary junk force into the Navy. This force, an off-shoot of the small anti-infiltration fleet established by the VNN in 1956, had been taken over by the Ministry of Defense in 1960. By 1965 it had grown to well over 100 junks, and the RVN ordered it reincorporated into the VNN. At the end of 1967 the personnel strength of the VNN had increased to 16,300. The number of ships had increased to 65, the River Assault Group (RAG) craft to 232, junks to 290 and 52 other miscellaneous craft. Throughout 1968 the VNN had placed emphasis on the improvement and expansion of their training programs. This action was predicated upon anticipation of gaining increased responsibility in the war effort as well as additional waterborne assets from the US. By the end of 1968 log range plans for the turnover of the majority of the USN waterborne assets in RVN had been formulated.

(S) On 26 Feb, JCS requested CINCPAC to furnish, if appropriate additional justification for the two DE. This request was passed on to COMUSMACV and on 13 Mar, justification outlined below was provided to CINCPAC:

1. The VNN had to patrol over 1,200 miles of coastline to prevent infiltration from the sea. The VNN had no ship capable of operating effectively in the 8-foot seas which occurred 15 percent of the time during the northeast monsoon, a highly probable infiltration period. The NVN historically preferred coastal infiltration into RVN and had repeatedly attempted to infiltrate trawlers which represented a potential VC resupply of 100 tons of war material per trawler. If not deterred, NVN could use coastal infiltration rather than the Ho Chi Minh Trail or the Sihanoukville-Cambodian border route. These DE would provide the VNN with the detection and intercept capability required.

2. The DE was the only all-weather ship capable of intercepting a 20-knot trawler.

3. Indications were that for many years the VNAF would not be able to furnish assets for an air barrier similar to the MARKET TIME P3 barrier. For this reason the DEs were even more necessary in the outer surface barrier to provide an all-weather detection and intercept capability during periods of no air cover and a reaction capability in case the USN should fly a covert MARKET TIME patrol in the future.

4. Should the NVN oppose coastal surveillance forces, the VNN was inferior in fire-power, speed, and all-weather capability. In any attack, NVN would have the further advantage of being able to concentrate its forces while the VNN would be required to defend a 1,200 mile coastline.

5. There were no ships in the approved VNN that could successfully oppose PCEs or the torpedo boats of the north. In fact, a DE against these forces would be marginal, but what was

proposed for the VNN was the minimum cost force that had at least a modest capability against the NVN Navy.

6. If the war continued at its present pace and MARKET TIME forces were continued, it was argued that two DEs turned over to the VNN could replace USN DEs that would save over \$1.6 million per year in US personnel costs and would release about 370 USN personnel for other duty.²⁵

(S) CINCPACFLT strongly endorsed the requirement to provide two DEs to the VNN and on 13 Mar stated in a message to CINCPAC:

CINCPACFLT concurs with (COMUSMACV's) comments... A DE for VNN is approved in the JSOP. The seaborne infiltration threat to the SVN coastline is very real and the potential for a surge in enemy capabilities is quite evident. To counter this real and potential threat, it is incumbent on the US to provide the VNN with the necessary defensive equipment. The ships and craft currently approved for VNN are not adequate. The seaborne threat is more real to SVN than to other countries in PACOM which have DEs.

(S) On 15 Mar, CINCPAC concurred in the justifications submitted by COMUSMACV and CINCPACFLT and recommended to the JCS that the two DEs deleted from the Phase II Plan be restored as a necessary augmentation in order to achieve and maintain a balanced VNN, capable of coastal patrol and fire support activities. He further requested early approval of the two DEs to permit commencement of the required training and associated planning necessary to accept these ships.⁵⁴

RVNAF Amphibious Task Force

(C) As far back as Mar 1968, MACV had been urging the Vietnamese to form a force similar to the US Mobile Riverine Force (for a detailed discussion of the US MRF, see 1968 MACV Command History, Vol 1, pp 242-243). At that time COMUSMACV had forwarded a recommendation to the CJGS for the formation of a Vietnamese Riverine Warfare Group composed of VNN and VNMC elements. During the ensuing six months, there had been numerous exchanges of letters and several conferences between MACV and JGS on the subject. The JGS agreed in the need for such a force, but had wanted to defer its formation until the VNN's River Assault Forces could be modernized. In September 1968, COMUSMACV had recommended to the CJGS that an Amphibious Task Force be established without waiting for the turnover of USN craft. At about the same time, the Phase II RVNAF force structure had been finalized. The rationale, at that time, had recognized that the Mekong Delta would remain the center of insurgency and would require amphibious/riverine forces for surveillance and control. To meet this requirement, the RVNAF-approved force structure included sufficient VNN ships and river assault craft to lift a total of nine VNMC battalions. It was envisioned that the combination of VNN and VNMC units operating from strategically located bases in the Delta and formed into an integrated amphibious team would provide a significant force capable of countering insurgency throughout the region. In late October 1968, the JGS had directed the formation of an amphibious task force (ATF) composed of one VNMC battalion and two VNN RAGS to be activated 1 Dec 68. The ATF had been reluctantly activated as scheduled but only operated for one week before operations were suspended because of poor coordination between JGS and ARVN commanders. This problem had been the subject of a mid-December JGS conference, but no solution was reached. The subject had been temporarily dropped by the JGS.

(C) In March, the JGS prepared a draft SOP for the new formation of an ATF (TF 211) to be composed of six new RAIDS and three VNMC battalions. Soon thereafter, the VNN prepared a somewhat different SOP for the assimilation of the same six RAIDS into the Navy.

(C) According to the JGS proposal the primary mission of the ATF would be to conduct riverine operations. It would be utilized as an element of the general reserve, with OPCON to the CTZ commanders of the CNO, VNN depending on the type of operations. It would be employed as a "joint" entity with only JGS having the authority to separate it into VNN and VNMC elements. Also, the CTZ commanders could request OPCON of the ATF or an ATG from JGS.

(C) According to the VNN proposal, the ATF would be composed of only the six VNN RAIDs with infantry elements attached, as necessary and required for operations. The primary mission would be to control water LOCs. It would be used as an organic unit of the VNN under the VNN CNO, who would determine the AOs, or under the OPCON of the CTZ commander, upon request, for limited operations.

(C) In the final analysis, MACV favored and recommended employment of the JGS proposal for the following reasons:

1. It was a more versatile and effective force and would be preferred for any type of riverine operation.
2. The JGS proposal made better use of the specialized training and capabilities of both the VNN and VNMC. Separate employment of these forces could only be authorized by JGS.
3. The joint ATF better replaced the US MRF than would a solely naval force.
4. The ATF, as an integrated force of the General Reserve, could react faster than a force that would have to be organized for each operation.

(C) The ATF, under the JGS proposal would have the following command and control relationships:

1. The CNO, VNN and the CG, VNMC would be responsible for their components of the ATF and would have command, less OPCON, of their elements. Since the ATF would be an element of the General Reserve, the JGS would have OPCON. For an interdiction mission, the JCS could pass OPCON of a-task group to the CNO.
2. For large operations, where the entire force would be required, the JGS could pass OPCON to a CTZ commander.
3. If only one of the task groups would be required for an operation, the JGS could pass OPCON of one task group to a CTZ commander who could then pass it to DTA commander if conditions warranted. The other two task groups of the ATF would remain under the OPCON of the JGS.

(C) The JGS proposal did not address the question of a specific commander for the ATF or any of the task groups, but, in accordance with the MACV doctrine for riverine operations, if the mission of the ATF or any of the groups were to deny the use of a waterway system or to maintain control of riverine LOCs, the overall commander should be a naval officer. If the mission, however, was to establish or maintain control of riverine LOCs and contiguous land areas, or to locate and destroy enemy forces, supplies and equipment, the overall commander should be a ground commander.

(S) The JGS proposal, which MACV concurred in and highly recommended an early execution date for, was a positive JGS response to a MAC V proposal for the attainment of the Phase II force structure goals in the improvement of the RVNAF.⁵⁷

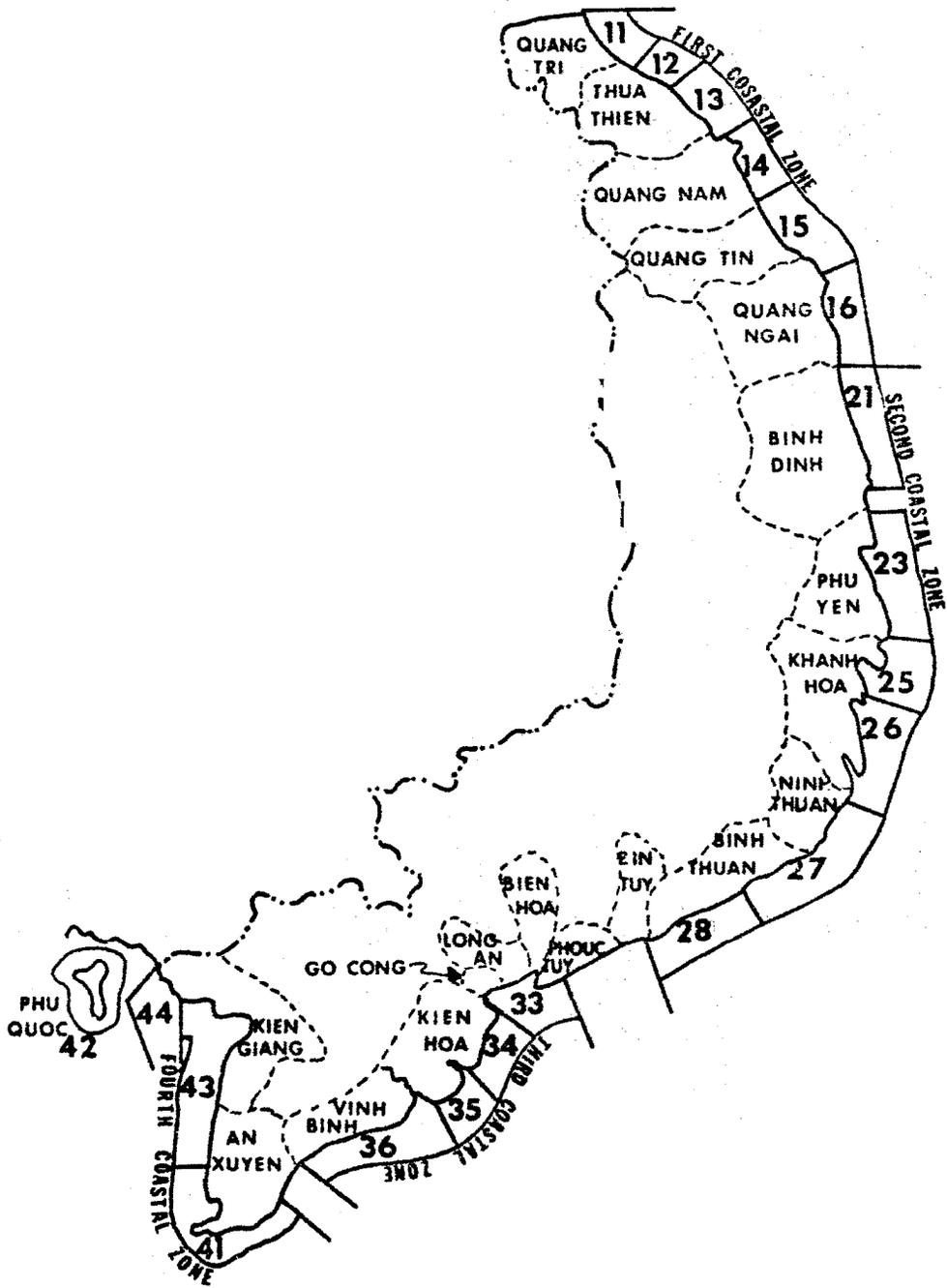
(C) The Vietnamese Navy was organized into six operational forces, four coastal forces, and four area commands. (See Figure VI-5.) Lines of command had been clarified and operational control of the various forces delegated to Force commanders. Additionally, the country was divided for

organization and simplicity into four coastal zones and two riverine areas, each under a zone or area commander.

(C) Coastal Forces. The Coastal Forces of the VNN consisted of 20 coastal groups. Each of the coastal groups was subordinate to one of the four VNN Coastal Zone commanders. A coastal zone corresponded geographically to one of the four CTZs with the exception of III CTZ which extends into IV CTZ. (See Figure VI-6.) The primary mission of the groups was to conduct coastal surveillance in order to prevent infiltration from the sea and to prevent illegal coastal transshipment of military contraband. The secondary missions included the support of small unit amphibious warfare operations, resources control, intelligence, and psychological warfare operations. Because of the variance in the tactical situation which existed in the vicinity of the coastal groups, their make-up varied considerably, using assets of Command, Yabuta, and Kien Giang junks as required.

(U) River Forces. The River Forces included the RAGs, RAIDs, and RPGs. The primary missions of these groups were amphibious assault and interdiction operations. Their secondary mission was riverine security/waterway control. RAGs 81 and 91 were responsible for escorting shipping and minesweeping on rivers and canals of the Delta. There was no Vietnamese commander of the River Force; however, the commanders of TF 211, 212, 214, Third and Fourth Riverine Areas, who commanded the RAIDs, RAGs, and RPGs had advisors assigned to coordinate information and studies on the various components of the River Forces. River Forces were composed of 12 RAGs, six RAIDs, and four RPGs. The units were administratively assigned as follows in the locations indicated:

<u>Third Riverine Areas</u>	<u>Lccation</u>
RAG 22	Nha Be
RAG 24	Cuu Long
RAG 28	Nha Be
RAG 30	Cuu Long
<u>Fourth Riverine Areas</u>	
RAG 21/23	Dong Tam
RAG 23/31	Vinh Long
RAG 25/29	Can Tho
RAG 26	Long Xuyen
<u>CTF 211</u>	
RAID 70	Tan An
RAID 71	Ben Luc
RAID 72	Dong Tam
RAID 73	Dong Tam
RAID 74	Long Xuyen
RAID 75	Long Xuyen
<u>CTF 212</u>	
RPG 51	Cat Lai
RPG 52	Nha Be
RPG 53	Ben Luc/Tan An
RPG 54	My Tho/Chau Doc
<u>CTF 214</u>	
RAG 81 (E)	Cat Lai
RAG 91	Cuu Long
RAG 27	Cat Lai
<u>First Coastal Zone</u>	
RAG 32	Hue



(U) Fleet Command. The VNN Fleet Command included the "blue water" ships of the navy. It was organized into two flotillas: a patrol flotilla made up of PCEs, MSCs, PGMs, LSSLs, and LSILs; and a logistics flotilla made up of PCs, MSCs, PGMs, LSMs, LSM{H}s, LCU, LSTs, AKLs, YOGs, and YRs. (See glossary for definition of abbreviations). The Fleet Command was directly responsible to the VNN Chief of Naval Operations for the readiness of these ships and craft. The Fleet Commander assigned and scheduled ships to operate in the Coastal Zones, Riverine Areas and the Rung Sat Special Zone. When deployed to those areas, the ships changed operational control from the Fleet Commander to that of the respective zone or area commander. When deployed, the ships operated from the following ports:

- I Coastal Zone - Danang
- II Coastal Zone - Nha Trang/Qul Nhon
- III Coastal Zone - An Thoi/(Phu Quoc Island)
- IV Coastal Zone - Vung Tau/Can Tho/Chau Duc
- Rung Sat Special Zone - Nha Be

(U) Saigon Naval Shipyard. The 57-acre Saigon Naval Shipyard, located on the southwest bank of the Saigon River about 30 miles from the South China Sea, represented the largest single industrial complex in SEASIA. The shipyard had been created by the French in 1863 as its major repair and resupply base in SEASIA. In 1969, 1,800 men were employed working six days a week, repairing and overhauling vessels ranging from the largest in the VNN (328-foot LST) to the smallest (35-foot LCVP). The shipyard's primary mission was support of the VNN enabling it to maintain its day and night patrol of the over 1,100 mile RVN coast line. The shipyard was equipped to perform the most complex kind of repairs including overhaul. A ferro-cement construction project was completed late in the year. The first ferro-cement PCF and Viper came off the line in December, (See pp VI-4h, 47 for the description of ferro-cement craft.) The shipyard was heavily committed to training programs to fill the critical job vacancies which existed during the year. (See Figure VI-7 for the organization of the Saigon Shipyard.)

(U) Training. The VNN training establishment consisted of a Training Bureau located at VNN Headquarters; Training Centers located in Saigon, Nha Trang, and Cam Ranh Bay; and All Fleet Command ships were homeported in Saigon normally returned there after deployments. Overhauls, major repair, and maintenance of Fleet Command ships were accomplished at the Vinal Shipyard and the YR 9601 in Saigon. The shipyard was capable of performing major overhauls on any ship in the VNN, The YR 9601 (Floating Workshop) was equipped to perform all repair and overhaul work except shaft, screw, and underwater hull work. Normally the YR was reserved for PGM repair support, however, "ship-to-shop" repairs were accepted from other ships.

(U) Flotilla I - Patrol Ship; Flotilla I was composed of 41 patrol ships. They were organized into four squadrons. The patrol types included LSSLs and LSILs which were normally operated only in Riverine Areas or the Rung Sat Special Zone; although, on accession, they were assigned the four coastal zones. Such duties included gunfire support for the coastal groups or other units requiring assistance, PSYOP light logistic/personnel lift missions and patrol of MARKET TIME stations. These operational commitments required 50 percent of the patrol flotilla be deployed at all times. To meet that requirement, normal patrol routine was 40 days at sea for PGMs and 50 days for LSILs, PCEs, PCs, and MSCs. Fleet Command patrol ships assigned to the riverine areas provided naval gunfire support as well as patrolling the main waterways in the riverine areas. They enforced area curfews and conducted light logistic personnel lift. One river patrol unit was assigned as convoy escort on the Mekong River to and from the Cambodian border.

(U) Flotilla II - Logistic Ships. Flotilla II was composed of 14 logistic ships which were further divided into *two* squadrons. The primary employment of these ships was to support the naval unit, and bases throughout RVN. Logistic ships were under the administrative control of the Fleet Commander, and under the operational control of the VNN Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics who acted upon orders from the Central Logistics Command of the JGS.

