

Fighting to the Finish

The Role of South Viet Nam's III Armor Brigade and III Corps Assault Force in the War's Final Days

by Tran Quang Khoi, Brigadier General, ARVN



BG Khoi

Foreword

Brigadier General Tran Quang Khoi graduated from the Vietnamese National Military Academy at Da Lat in 1952, the French Cavalry School at Saumur in 1955, and the U.S. Army Armor School at Fort Knox in 1959. As senior advisor to the Vietnamese Chief of Armor, I first met him in 1966 when he deployed the ARVN 5th Cavalry to Xuan Loc. I accompanied him on several operations to reconnoiter for the impending arrival of the U.S. 11th ACR. In May of 1966, he provided his 1/5 tank troop (M41A3) for airlift to Da Nang ("When Tanks Took Wings," ARMOR, May-June 1994). In early 1970, his combined-arms Task Force 318 spearheaded the U.S./VN incursion into Cambodia, earning his Corps CG the sobriquet "The Patton of the Parrot's Beak." In November 1970, he organized and trained III Armor Bde and commanded it in Cambodia, both before and after attending the U.S. Army Command & General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth in 1972-3. In 1971-72, I frequently met him in places like An Loc and Loc Ninh as his brigade raced between flash points in Cambodia. Released from "Re-education Camp" after 17 years, he now resides in Springfield, VA.

He is one of the finest Armor leaders I ever met; bold and daring, but not foolhardy, he knew full well how to use mobility and firepower to produce shock even in terrain like Viet Nam's. He also had the imagination and flexibility to task-organize in such a way as to get the most from his available assets. Had Khoi been a tank battalion commander in Third Army during World War II, General Patton would have acknowledged two peers: Creighton Abrams and Tran Quang Khoi.

RAYMOND R. BATTREALL
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During the final days of the Viet Nam War, I commanded the ARVN III Armor Brigade and III Corps Assault Task Force (ATF) throughout III Corps Tactical Zone and in defense of the City of Bien Hoa against the final Communist offensive in South Viet Nam. For twenty years since the fall of South Viet Nam on 30 April 1975, I have read many articles by both Communist and Free-World writers. Many of them are ambiguous or inexact, especially when referring to actions east of and in Bien Hoa. Some even distort the truth and wound the honor of III Armor Brigade/III Corps ATF, so I have an obligation to both the living and the dead to correct the record so as not to be ungrateful to the heroes who willingly followed me and fought to the very last minute of the war.

The Early Days

From 1970 on, there were four armor brigades, one per corps. Each headquarters was highly mobile, track-mounted, packed with radio gear, and manned by a carefully selected, battle-tested staff. Designed to control up to six maneuver battalions (a division has nine) the brigades had no organic units but were "task organized" by their corps commanders according to the mission at hand: sometimes with as many as **18** battalions!

III Armor Brigade headquarters was activated in November 1970 and, after intensive training with a U.S. advisory team headed by LTC C.M. Crawford, with MAJ Racine, CPT Waer, and others, was declared combat ready and assigned to III Corps for employment in January 1971. Task-organized with the 15th and 18th Armored Cavalry Squadrons and a variety of infantry, artillery, and supporting units, it was the core and frame of LTG Do Cao Tri's III Corps ATF, established to meet battlefield demands in Cambodia. The ATF was the corps' combined-arms reserve. When reinforced for violent combat, its strength and capability were equivalent to a mechanized division. It operated

either alone or with the ARVN's 5th, 18th, or 25th Infantry Divisions. Whenever there was heavy combat in the III Corps Tactical Zone, the ATF was always present.

The Task Force crossed swords many times with the North Vietnamese Army's (NVA) 5th, 7th, and 9th Infantry Divisions, both in Cambodia and Viet Nam. It rescued from destruction the 5th Ranger TF at Chlong and Dambe in February and March 1971, the 8th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) of the 5th Infantry Division at Snoul in June 1971, and the 30th Ranger Battalion at Alpha Base, six km east of Krek plantation, in November 1971 (Map 1).

The tragic death of General Do Cao Tri in a helicopter crash in February 1971 marked the turning point of the war in South Viet Nam. LTG Nguyen Van Minh, succeeding General Tri as III Corps Commander, made mistake after mistake from the very start. He and I differed on many points regarding the conduct of operations in Cambodia. Because of his weakness, we suffered many setbacks and, little by little, lost the initiative to the enemy. Often, I could not help arguing with him, and our relationship became more and more tense. After the victory near Krek in November 1971, I made up my mind to apply for admission to the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

From 1972 to 1973, I went to the U.S. to complete my advanced military education. Shortly after my departure, General Minh dispersed the resources of the III Armor Brigade and completely disbanded the III Corps ATF. When the battle of An Loc — Binh Long broke out violently during the summer of 1972, the Armor units of III Corps were completely paralyzed.

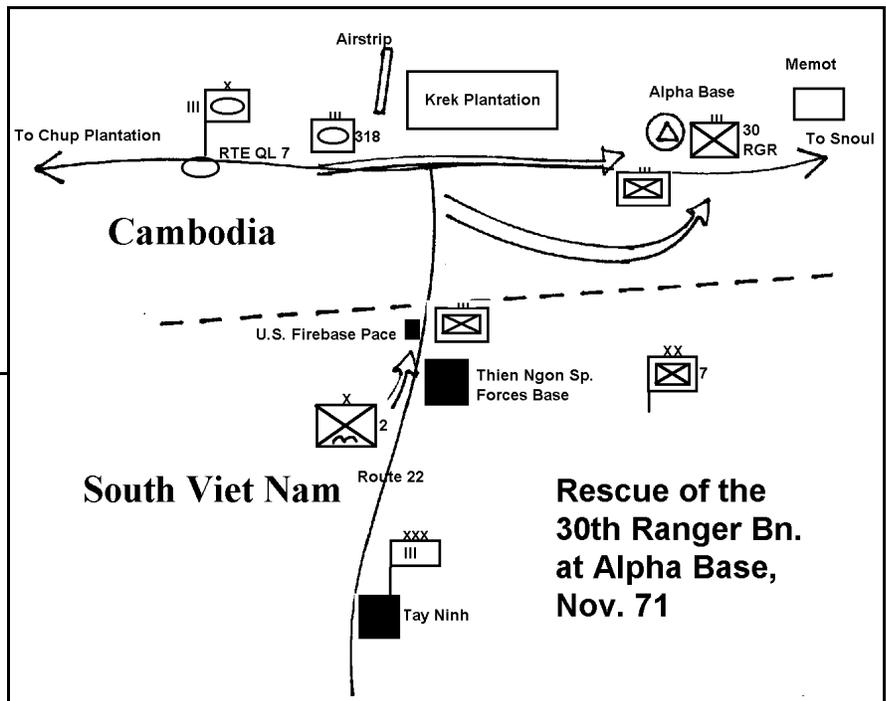
When I returned to Viet Nam in 1973, LTG Pham Quoc Thuan had replaced General Minh. He insisted that I rejoin III Armor Brigade. I resumed command of the brigade on 7 November 1973 and suggested to the new corps

MAP 1

At top right, detail map shows III Corps attack on the 7th NVA Infantry Division just over the Cambodian border.

MAP 2

At lower right, area map identifies major III Corps/III ATF sectors of operation.



Rescue of the 30th Ranger Bn. at Alpha Base, Nov. 71

commander that III Corps ATF be re-established according to General Tri's model. He gave me complete authority for this task. I reassembled dispersed armor units and, with the new M48 medium tanks of 22d Armor and M548 tracked cargo carriers to transport fuel and ammunition, I changed the composition of Armor units and improved the mobility of 105mm towed artillery units.

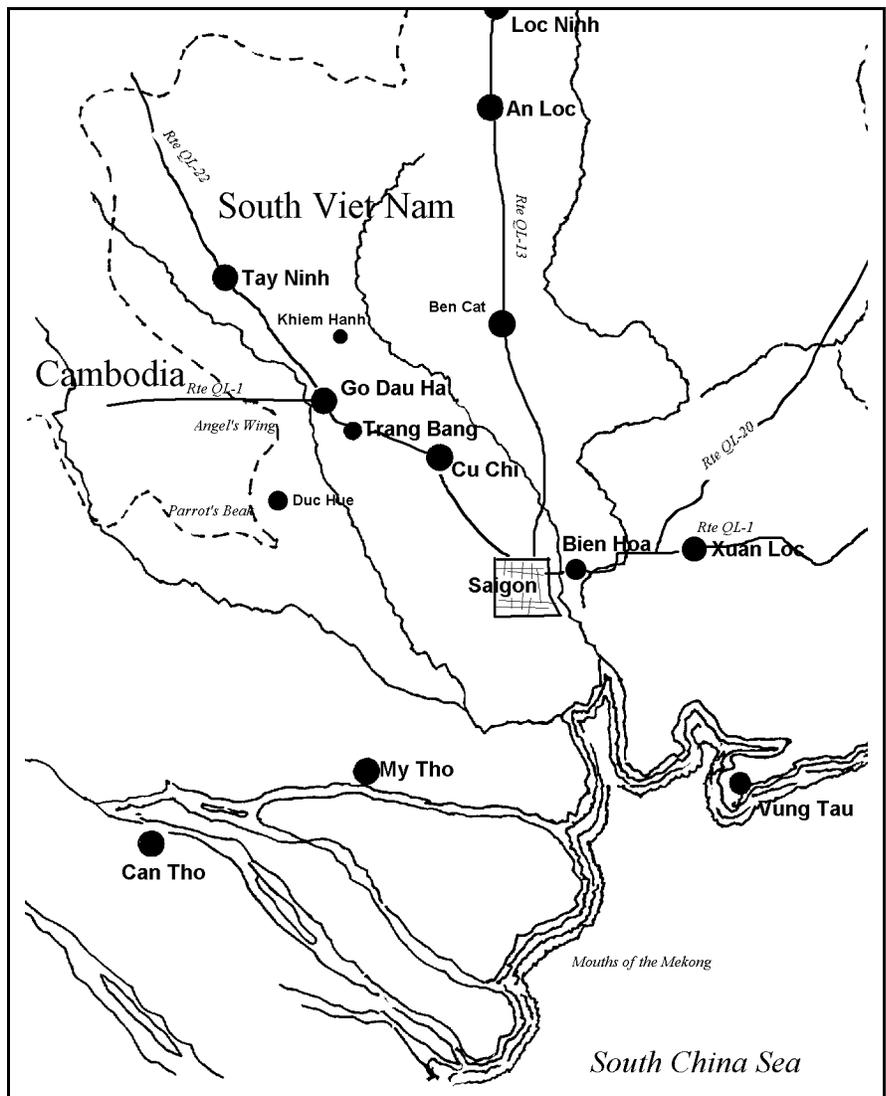
- The 15th and 18th Armored Cavalry Squadrons had had their M41A3 light tank troops reassigned during my absence. They had five M113-equipped Armored Cavalry Assault Troops (ACATs) when I returned. I shifted men and equipment to squeeze a sixth ACAT out of available resources.

- The recently fielded M48 tank battalion (22d Armor) was identical to the U.S. tank battalion of that time: three 17-tank companies plus three command tanks for a total of 54. I reduced their platoons from five tanks to three (easier for a platoon leader to control) which, with two command tanks, made eleven per company. I was then able to activate a fourth tank company which, with three battalion-level command tanks, gave a total of 47, with seven of the original tanks left over as a supply reserve.

- Reinforcements from III Corps were 33d Ranger Group, 46th Artillery Battalion (155mm towed), 61st Artillery Battalion (105mm towed), and 302d Engineer Battalion.

- The 105mm towed artillery battalion was converted to "self-propelled" by mounting the howitzers on M548 tracked cargo carriers. Each M548 was modified by adding two removable ramps for the 105s to mount and dismount. Each 105 crew was trained to mount and dismount its howitzer and fire as quickly as possible. The result was a unit almost as effective as a truly self-propelled battalion.

- III Corps ATF was organized into three sub task forces, 315, 318, and



322, based on the 15th and 18th Cavalry and 22d Armor. Each had two ACATs, one M48 medium tank company, one Ranger battalion, one track-mounted 105 battery, and one engineer platoon.

Under III Corps ATF control was the 33d Ranger Group HQ, with its own reconnaissance company and 105 battery, an M48 tank company, the 46th Artillery Battalion (155mm towed), the 302d Engineer Battalion (-), and a logistics company from 3d Log Command. (Fig. 1)

In addition to intensive combat training, the troops were also educated on the ideas of Communism so they could understand the enemy and his tactics. When all were well prepared both physically and mentally, I reported the ATF to the corps commander as combat ready. On 2 April 1974, III Corps ATF took the enemy by surprise on the border between Cu Chi and Trang Bang Districts, relieving enemy pressure on Bo Cap and Cha Ray outposts (Map 3). TF 315 inflicted heavy losses on the Viet Cong Tay Son Battalion.

Near the end of March 1974, the 83d Ranger Battalion at Duc Hue Base near the Cambodian border was surrounded by the NVA 5th Division. A valiant, month-long effort by the ARVN 25th Division — attacking, as expected, from east to west inside Viet Nam — failed to break the siege. Even aerial resupply and medevac missions were cut off, and the situation appeared almost hopeless. LTG Thuan asked me for a plan. My plan (Map 4), to take the enemy from the rear in a cross-border attack, shocked him. He feared that a new incursion into Cambodia would cause problems with the United Nations. I insisted, however, that this was the only hope for success, so he took the plan to President Thieu for approval.

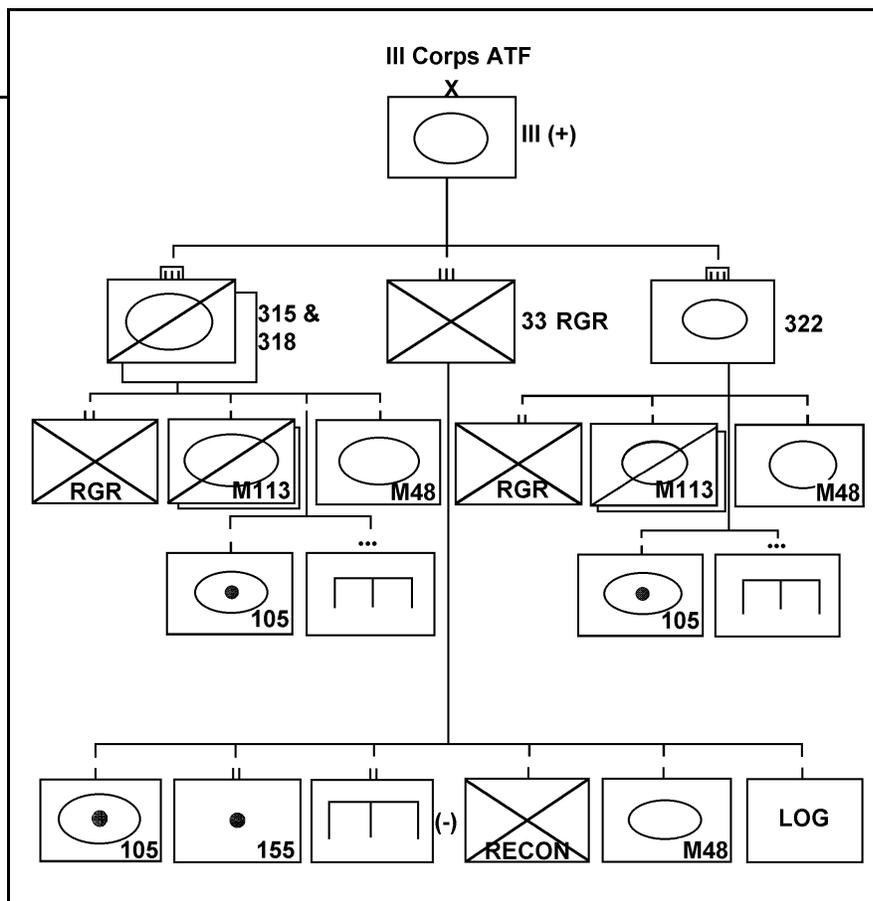


FIG. 1

The actual operation consisted of two phases:

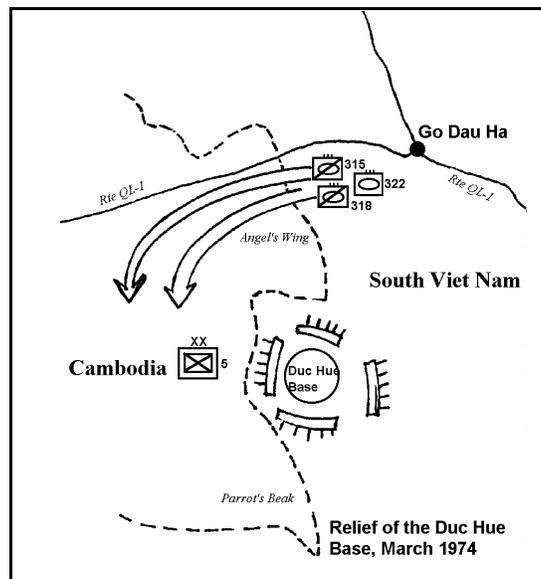
- Deception. On 22 April III ATF moved from Go Dau Ha to Lai Thieu in Binh Duong Province.
- Attack. III ATF returned to Go Dau Ha under blackout conditions on the night of 28 April. Tanks crossed the river at midnight on rubber rafts provided by the 302d Engineers. The ATF crossed the border and occupied attack positions by 0300 on the 29th. TF 315 made the main attack and TF 318 the

secondary. TF 322 in reserve followed TF 315. The mission was accomplished by 1 May.

This relief of the 83d Ranger Battalion at Duc Hue proved to be the last major ARVN offensive of the war. Severe constraints on ammunition, fuel, and flying hours caused by lack of



MAP 3



MAP 4

promised U.S. support allowed no new initiatives. Nevertheless, the NVA 5th Division was never again a threat.

From late May until November, the ATF supported the 18th and later the 5th Infantry Divisions in their struggle to retake An Dien, Base 82, and Rach Bap in the Iron Triangle.

On 30 October, LTG Du Quoc Dong replaced General Thuan as III Corps commander. Communist forces became stronger and stronger, and more and more aggressive. Their attacks all over the country flagrantly violated the Paris Peace Agreement. In January 1975, Phuoc Long Province fell into their hands; General Dong resigned; and LTG Nguyen Van Toan, the Chief of Armor, took command of III Corps. Toan, who had commanded II Corps during the Communist Easter Offensive of 1972, promptly set about making his overworked regular divisions more mobile by assigning all fixed posts to Regional Forces. He also launched periodic spoiling attacks in an attempt to keep the enemy off balance.

As part of these efforts, III Corps ATF encircled northern Binh Duong Province in February and destroyed the VC Phu Loi Battalion headquarters. It also relieved enemy pressure at Go Dau Ha, Khiem Hanh, and Dau Tieng in March, and on the 25th retook Truong Mit, virtually destroying the NVA 271st Regiment in the process.

But, especially for 14 days and nights from 11 to 25 April 1975, III Corps ATF reinforced by the 8th Regiment of the 5th Infantry Division fought and stopped a ferocious NVA corps advance near the junction of National Routes 1 and 20 as part of the epic battle of Xuan Loc, the war's bloodiest. (See NVA General Van Tien Dung's book, *The Great Spring Victory*.) At the end of this time, I was forced to use two CBU-55 bombs from Bien Hoa Air Base to rescue the 18th Division's 52d Infantry. We then supported its withdrawal to Long Binh Base.

Events developed at a chaotic pace in late April. I and II Corps had disintegrated, all NVA fighting divisions were moving south, and pressure east of



BG Khoi, then a colonel, briefs LTG Do Cao Tri in early 1970.

Bien Hoa worsened with each passing day. I was invited to join a coup to overthrow President Thieu but refused strongly and publicly declared against it. Bien Hoa Air Base was neutralized by enemy artillery fires and shut down. On 20 April, BG Le Minh Dao's 18th Division finally abandoned its magnificent defense of Xuan Loc and withdrew to Long Binh. On the 21st, President Thieu resigned. From the front on 22 April, I wrote to General Charles Timmes, Assistant to the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon, "...I have been engaging with NVA divisions in the vicinity of Dau Giay, Xuan Loc while Congress debates whether or not to give further military assistance of 300 million dollars to the ARVN. I think the situation is almost hopeless. Even if Congress approves the funding now, it is too late. Nevertheless, I and my fellow soldiers have decided to stay and fight until the very end. My only request is that you would help my family migrate to a safe location...."

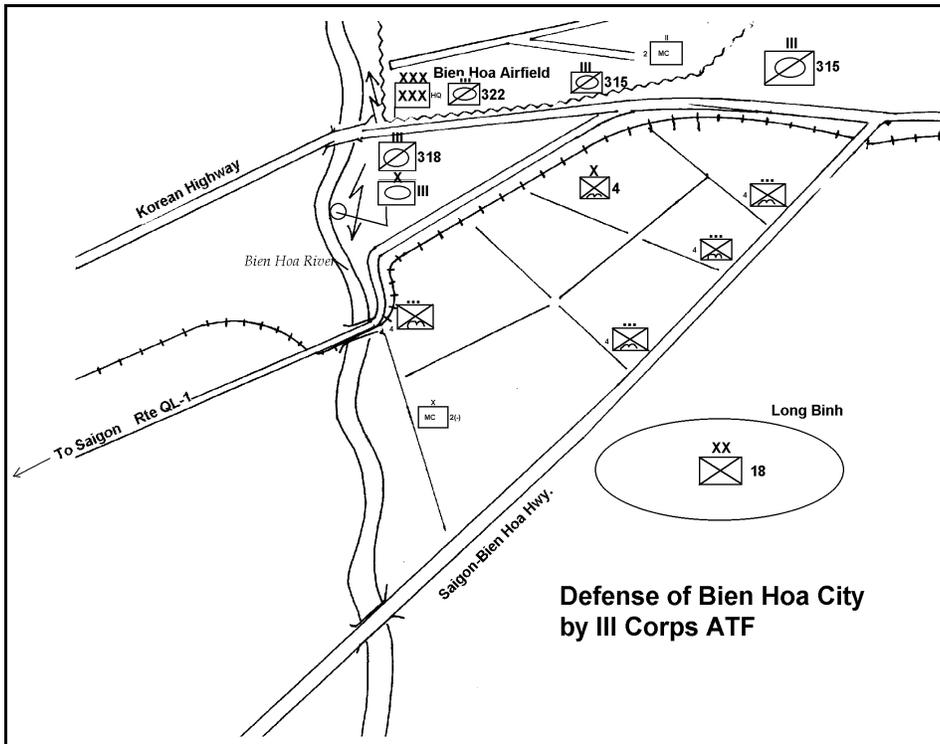
III Armor Bde and III Corps ATF The Last Five Days of the Viet Nam War

After five days of recuperation, the 18th Infantry Division was ordered to move east on 25 April and replace III Corps ATF on the front line at Hung Loc-Dau Giay. The ATF returned to its base in Bien Hoa for equipment maintenance and rest. The 8th Infantry

Regiment returned to its parent unit. That evening, the enemy seized the ARVN Armor School at Long Thanh. On corps order, I immediately sent TF 322 and a Marine Battalion to meet the enemy. They engaged heavily with a strong enemy force supported by tanks, destroying 12 T54 tanks and forcing the enemy to withdraw by midnight. This victory raised the morale and fighting spirit of all combat units in Bien Hoa. After inspecting the battlefield, LTG Toan promised a 1.2 million piastre reward (100,000 piastres per tank) to those who had contributed to the destruction of the T54s. From now on, the ATF became III Corps reserve.

On 29 April, III Corps ATF was reinforced by the 2d Marine Brigade and 4th Airborne Brigade. At noon, General Toan held an urgent conference at 18th Infantry Division Headquarters in Long Binh. Only General Toan, General Le Minh Dao, and myself were present. Dao was ordered to defend Long Binh and control the Bien Hoa highway. My ATF was to defend the City of Bien Hoa with all Regional and Popular Forces in the area under my control. At that time Cu Chi had been lost; the 25th Infantry Division had been overrun; and its commander, BG Ly Tong Ba, had been captured. General Toan withheld that information from us, as he was preparing to desert. Dao and I later learned the truth when we met Ba in a Communist concentration camp.

As the meeting concluded, COL Hieu, commander of the 18th Division's 43d Regiment, burst into the room to report in an emotional tone that the enemy was attacking Trang Bom and his regiment was retreating to Long Binh. General Dao's facial expression changed as he heard the news. General Toan reacted furiously and screamed his orders: Hieu was to take his regiment and return to Trang Bom. He pretended to accept the order, saluted, and left. I knew, however, that the 18th Division could not sustain the front at Trang Bom. It was already weakened by the fighting at Xuan Loc, had had only five days to recuperate, and the inevitable would happen in time.



MAP 5

streets, and the shops were closed. Everything seemed to be in order.

At around 1800 hours, the enemy began to infiltrate from the north. They were met by TF 322. A Ranger unit of TF 315 also engaged them near Camp Ngo Van Sang. The enemy hugged close to our positions, and both sides exchanged continuous fire at a distance of 15-20 meters. Even so, our men fought courageously and confidently. There was no incident of desertion within the ATF. Under strong fire support from Armor units, the enemy was pushed back.

At 2000 hours, I called Camp Phu Dong near Saigon. This was the location of Armor Command, where III Corps headquarters had settled a couple of days ago. There was an answer, but no one had the authority to receive my report. I then called the Operations Center of the Joint General Staff without avail. Finally, I was forced simply to wait impatiently for further orders from Saigon. I wondered if the new President and commander-in-chief had a solution to this national disaster and if he had any further mission for us.

Around 2200 hours, I was called by LTG Nguyen Huu Co. He was a former chief of the Joint General Staff and Minister of Defense in 1965. Because of his political differences with then-Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky, he had been forced to resign in 1966. He said, "I am General Co. Right now I am standing next to the President. We want to know your current situation in Bien Hoa." I replied, "I am defending Bien Hoa. Le Minh Dao is defending Long Binh. Nguyen Van Toan has deserted. The airfield has been seized by the enemy. Heavy enemy pressure is coming from the north and northeast."

A few minutes passed, then General Co said, "The President wants to know whether you can defend Bien Hoa until 0800 tomorrow so that negotiation with the other side can take place." I replied without hesitation, "Yes, I can do that." At the other end of the line I heard General Co's voice reporting to the president. Finally he said to me, "General Khoi, this is your order from the president: Defend the City of Bien Hoa until 0800 hours, 30 April 1975. I wish you good luck." I responded, "Yes, sir."

General Toan stood up, shook my hand and Dao's, and said, "I wish you both the best of luck in combat. I will fly back to JGS to request support for you." He then turned to me and said, "As for the 1.2 million piastres, I will send someone to deliver the money to your headquarters." These were his last words to me before he deserted.

As soon as I returned to my headquarters, I held a meeting with my unit commanders. Everyone was present except the Bien Hoa sector commander and his assistant. They had deserted a few days earlier.

These were my orders as of 1300 hours, 29 April 1975:

- The City of Bien Hoa is now under martial law. Curfew will be at 1500 hours.
- Each Regional and Popular Force unit is to stay at its assigned post. No movement is permitted.
- The Police Force is responsible for the internal safety of the City.
- Absolutely no one is to enter or leave the City.

To defend Bien Hoa I organized the following (Map 5):

- TF 322 defend the northern sector from the airfield to III Corps headquarters.
- 2d Marine Brigade protect III Corps headquarters with one battalion.

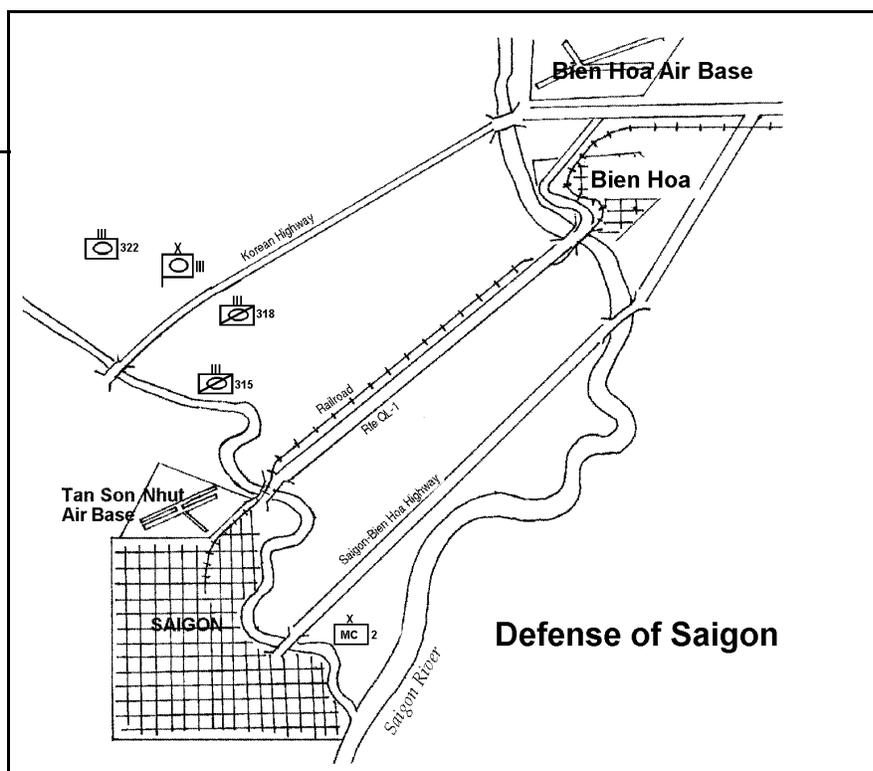
Brigade (-) defend the southern sector south of National Route 1.

- 4th Airborne Brigade secure the new Bien Hoa highway and railroad bridges. Establish blocking positions on all routes of approach.
- TF 315 defend the eastern sector from the intersection of Bien Hoa Highway and National Route 1 to Lo Than (near Camp Ngo Van Sang).
- TF 318 assemble between the main gate of Bien Hoa Air Base and the new Bien Hoa Highway bridge as a reserve. Screen the western sector along the Bien Hoa River.
- Artillery support: Fire support plan.
- ATF Headquarters positioned in the garden of the Corps Commander's Palace.

Around 1500 hours, while I was having lunch with my staff in the palace, General Toan's helicopter landed next to mine in the garden. His pilot, MAJ Co, reported that he had flown General Toan and his aides to Vung Tau (Cap St. Jacques) where they were met by LTG Hoang Xuan Lam and BG Phan Hoa Hiep. The generals and their aides then booked a fishing boat to rendezvous with the U.S. fleet at sea. This didn't surprise me. MAJ Co then asked if he could stay and work for me. I agreed.

At 1700 hours, I rode in an escorted jeep to inspect inside and outside the city. The people were absent from the

MAP 6



Around 2345 hours, the enemy opened heavy artillery fire on the city. Then a regimental-size combined armor-infantry force attacked along National Route 1 from Ho Nai to the III Corps headquarters. TF 315, under LTC Do Duc Thao, engaged them and broke their attack. Many T-54 tanks were destroyed, and the enemy retreated.

At 0200 hours, 30 April, BG Dao of the 18th Infantry Division called me on the radio and said, "I have been overwhelmed and Long Binh is lost." I asked, "Where are you now? Do you need any help?" He replied, "I am at the National Military Cemetery and retreating toward Thu Duc." I felt very sorry for Dao. During the last two years, he and I had worked very hard together, always on the move and against time. We had been together at all the battlefields in III Corps Tactical Zone because my ATF was Corps Mobile Force 1 and Dao's 18th Division was Corps Mobile Force 2, according to General Do Cao Tri's SOP. When we were together in prison, the Communists kept a close watch on both of us because we had caused the most damage to their forces and were considered the two most anti-Communist "fanatics."

Around 0300 hours, the enemy bombarded Bien Hoa again. This time their fire was stronger and more accurate. I guessed their intention was to control Bien Hoa at all costs after seizing Long Binh. I was preparing to engage in this decisive battle with my entire force; but surprisingly, TF 315 stopped their frontal attack, enveloped their left flank, and inflicted serious casualties upon them. They were forced to retreat to the Bien Hoa Highway, and the city returned to calm.

At exactly 0800 hours, 30 April, I tried to call General Co or the JGS headquarters in Saigon, but to no avail. I then held a conference with all my unit commanders to exchange information concerning the internal and external situation of the city. The enemy had retreated, leaving only minor guerrilla activity outside the city. Inside, it was calm. Everyone stayed indoors in compliance with the curfew, and the streets were deserted. The night before, I had helped the city police with additional manpower to prevent any outbreak

from the jail. I was so happy to see that our troops' morale was still high. They had plenty of courage and discipline. There was no rioting, looting, raping, or other activity in the streets. The city was under complete control. Also, the night before, a group of disbanded 18th Division soldiers had tried to enter under curfew. I had ordered them driven out because their presence might have caused major security problems to the civilians and loss of morale and discipline among our troops leading to chain-reaction disintegration, as had occurred last month in the Central Highlands.

Now it was 0830. I concluded that Bien Hoa was no longer the enemy's objective; he was concentrating all his forces to attack Saigon. We had no communications with any higher headquarters, so I decided to pull out of Bien Hoa and march to rescue the capital. All the unit commanders present supported my decision. I immediately issued an operations order. III Corps ATF was to move toward Saigon as follows (Map 6):

a. 4th Airborne Bde, LTC Lo:

- Move on the right side of the Bien Hoa-Saigon railroad.
- At the outskirts of Saigon, deploy to the right of the railroad and await further orders.

b. 2d Marine Bde, LTC Lien:

- Move on the left side of the Bien Hoa-Saigon railroad.
- At the outskirts of Saigon, deploy on the left side of the railroad and await further orders.

c. III Corps ATF:

- Remain in position for support until the Airborne and Marine troops have safely crossed the new Bien Hoa Bridge.
- Using the Korean Highway as the axis of advance, move toward Saigon in the following formation:

(1) TF 315, LTC Do Duc Thao:

- Lead the column
- Deploy on the near side of the Binh Trieu bridge and await further orders.

(2) TF 322, LTC Nguyen Van Lien:

- Follow TF 315
- Deploy behind TF 315 at the Binh Trieu bridge and await further orders.

(3) III Corps ATF and units under direct control:

- Follow TF 322
- Deploy behind TF 322 at the Binh Trieu bridge and await further orders.

(4) TF 318, LTC Nguyen Duc Duong:



Above, ARVN cavalry conduct reconnaissance over swampy terrain near Cu Chi.



At left, an ARVN M41 light tank, used by III Corps/III ATF until replaced by M48s. Thought to lack firepower, the M41's 75-mm gun proved quite adequate against NVA T54s when they appeared on the battlefield.

- Rear guard
- Deploy behind ATF Hq at the Binh Trieu bridge and await further orders.

Before boarding my helicopter, I inspected my troops for the last time. They were departing the City of Bien Hoa in an organized formation. Each man was neatly dressed, of dignified bearing, with a look of self-confidence and resignation on his face, showing no fear. They looked just as proud as they had in earlier times when we fought in Cambodia under General Do Cao Tri. I looked at my watch: it was 0900.

I boarded General Toan's helicopter, piloted by MAJ Co. My own helicopter, piloted by CPT Tan, followed. We flew over Bien Hoa at low altitude and saw that the city was still calm and apparently in good order. My forces moved steadily toward Saigon, destroying all enemy blocking positions in their path.

Then an anxious thought came to mind: what would happen if our forces approaching Saigon were mistaken for the enemy and fired upon? Without communications, this was a great risk to my men. While I was pondering a solution to this problem, MAJ Co inter-

rupted and asked, "Sir, if you wish to flee the country, I can help you." I replied, "What about you?" He said, "After flying you out there, I will return to my family in Bien Hoa." I responded, "Thanks very much for your concern, but I have decided to stay with my men."

We flew at high altitude toward the Armor Command and III Corps headquarters in Camp Phu Dong. Far below, I saw a huge concentration of enemy guns, tanks, and troop-carrying trucks stretched out along Bien Hoa Highway and Route 13, like two long snakes crawling into the Capital. We landed at Camp Phu Dong, and I dashed inside looking for an officer on duty. People were pacing back and forth anxiously, and I didn't meet anyone in authority except a young lieutenant wearing III Corps insignia. I told him that I needed to use the telephone to contact the Capital Military District to inform them that my troops were approaching and should not be fired upon.

I made countless attempts to contact CMD, but it was hopeless. I then tried calling the JGS Operations Center, also without success. In the meantime, I heard volleys of enemy artillery fire

coming from the direction of Tan Son Nhut Air Base. At that moment my Armor units arrived at the Binh Trieu bridge.

Then I heard the President's voice on the radio ordering all Republic of Viet Nam Armed Forces to cease fire and surrender. It was 1025 hours, 30 April 1975 by my watch. This was the end. I was most sorry for the outcome of the war, but I had done my best. I let my troops execute the President's final order for themselves: I had nothing more to say. But deep in my heart, I silently thanked all of them for their courage, sacrifice, and dedication until the very last minute of the war. Together, we had fulfilled our obligation and oath of allegiance.

Conclusion

I was, of course, arrested by the Communists and held captive in various concentration camps for 17 years. After my release in 1992, I came to the U.S. as a political refugee in 1993.

During the early years of captivity, I was interrogated intensively. The Communists were puzzled by the effectiveness of III Armor Brigade/III Corps ATF. They studied our organization and operations and made me write a composition entitled "How could III Armor Brigade/III Corps ATF fight unflinchingly against the Revolutionary Forces during the Spring Offensive?" They told me that III Corps ATF had been the only ARVN unit to confront them successfully until the last minute of the war.

Later on, we were transferred from the management of the Communist Ministry of Defense to that of the Ministry of Interior. They investigated our past military activities and were shocked by our exploits, which they regarded as war crimes. They accused me of prolonging the war for years and, along with the other commanding generals, I was selected to be prosecuted as a war criminal. Happily, the U.S., the UN, and the international media intervened on our behalf.

I shall never repent having done what I did, nor complain about the consequences of my captivity. If history were to repeat itself, I would choose the same path. By so doing, I know from experience that I would lose everything but HONOR.