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February 12, 1974

SUBJECT: Military Regions and Tactical Zones

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. Summary This airgram traces the development of Military Regions from the French-introduced 1952 system of military regions for all of Viet Nam, through the period of Coops Tactical Zones (1961-70), to the institution of the present system of Military Regions in 1970. End Summary.
2. The Republic of Viet Nam's present system of Military Regions (MRs) which was instituted in 1970 is the most recent development in the evolution of military regions which began in 1952 under the French. At first, the limits of the military regions were defined in terms of the boundaries of the already existing units of civil administration. However, before long units of civil administration (provinces and districts) were being defined as being part of the territory of the military regions, both in Government documents and in everyday speech. Thus the division of the Republic of Viet Nam into military region is of considerable importance in both the military and civil spheres
3. This airgram traces the development of the present system of military regions chronologically. The history of the military regions can be divided into three phases:
 - a. 1952 -- 1961: The old system of military regions organized by the French;
 - b. 1961 -- 1970: The system of Corps Tactical Zones (and subsidiary Division Tactical Areas and. Special Tactical Zones).
(The 44th Special Tactical Zone along the Cambodian border in MR 4 was not phased out until late 1973.) The corps tactical zones -- termed simply tactical zones (TZs) (*vung chien thuat*) in Vietnamese -- were an outgrowth of the formation of military corps: I and II Corps in 1957, III Corps in 1959, and, later, IV Corps in 1963;
 - c. 1970 to date: The present system of military regions.
4. Material on the development of the Capital Special Zone (currently Saigon and Gia Dinh Province) is also included in this study.

5. Chronological Development of the Military Regions

A. Decree 61-QP of June 26, 1952

This decree went into effect on July 1, 1952. It divided the territory of Viet Nam into four military regions:

- 1st Military Region -- South Viet Nam (the former French colony of Cochin China, also known as "Nam Ky");
- 2nd Military Region -- Central Viet Nam (the coastal provinces, also known as "Trung Ky");
- 3rd Military Region - North Viet Nam (also known as "Ba Ky") including the Northern mountain areas;
- 4th Military Region -- The Southern mountain plateau (*vung cao nguyen mien nam*), often called the Central Highlands.

The decree, which was signed by Chief of State Bao Dai, stipulated that each of the military regions was to be placed under the authority of a general or other ranking military officer. It also provided that regional boundaries were to coincide with local administrative boundaries.

B. Decree 19-QP of March 19, 1954

Under the provisions of the decree,

- 2nd Military Region boundaries were changed to include that portion of Viet Nam from the northern border of Quang Ngai Province "up" (presumably to the boundary with the 3rd Military Region);
- 4th Military Region boundaries were changed to include the Central Highlands and Central Viet Nam from the northern border of Quang Ngai "down" (i.e. to the south).

C. Decree 117-QP of September 6, 1956

The boundaries of the 2nd and 4th Military Regime were changed by this decree. In addition, a new military region, the 3rd Military Region (not to be confused with the former 3rd Military Region in North Viet Nam which was evacuated by the French in 1954-55 as a result of the 1954 Geneva Agreement) was formed. The new boundaries were as follows:

- 2nd Military Region -- Three provinces: Quang Tri, Thua Thien, and Quang Nam (which then included present day Quang Tin Province);
- 3rd Military Region (new) -- Five provinces: Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Pleiku, Kontum, and Phu Yen;
- 4th Military Region -- Five provinces: Ban Me Thuot, Djiring (later Lam Dong), Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan, and Binh Thuan.

D. Decree 147/b-QP of October 24, 1956

This decree brought about the division of the South (the former French Colony of Cochin China) into two military regions. The 1st Military Region, which formerly encompassed the entire South, was split in two. The eastern provinces (*mien*

dong) retained their designation as the 1st Military Region. The western provinces (*mien tay*) were designated the 5th Military Region. In addition, a new Capital Military District (*Quan khu Thu do*), an outgrowth of the former Saigon-Cholon Autonomous Sector established in 1952, was formed. The effects of the decree are detailed below:

1st Military Region -- Nine provinces: Gia Dinh, Phuoc Long, Binh Long, Long Khanh, Bien Hoa, Tay Ninh, Phuoc Tuy, Binh Tuy and Binh Duong;
5th Military Region -- Twelve provinces and one island: Long An, Kien Tuong, Kien Phong, Dinh Tuong, Kien Hoa, Vinh Binh, Vinh Long, An Giang, Phong Dinh, Ba Xuyen, Kien Giang, An Xuyen, and Con Son Island;
Capital Military District: The City of Saigon.

Decree 147 b-QP followed by two days Decree 143-NV of October 22, 1956 which reorganized and renamed most of the provinces in the southern part of the Republic of Viet Nam

E. Decree 89-QP of April 16, 1959

This decree changed the boundaries of the 1st and 5th Military Regions and those of the Capital Military District:

1st Military Region -- Nine provinces: Phuoc Thanh, Phuoc Long, Binh Long, Long Khanh, Bien Hoa, Tay Ninh, Phuoc Tuy, Binh Tuy, and Binh Duong;
5th Military Region -- Eleven provinces and one island; Kien Tuong, Kien Phong, Dinh Thong, Kien Hoa, Vinh Long, Vinh Binh, An Giang, Phong Dinh, Ba Xuyen, Kien Giang, An Xuyen, and Con Son Island;
Capital Military District: City of Saigon and Gin Dinh and Long An Provinces.

F. Decree 44-QP of February 24, 1960

The 3rd Military Region, created in September 1956, was abolished by this decree. With immediate effect, Quang Ngai and Kontum became part of the 2nd Military Region. Pleiku, Binh Dinh, and Phu Yen became part of the 4th Military Region.

G. Decree 98-QP of April 13, 1961.

This decree brought about a significant change. It cancelled Decree 61-QP of June 26, 1952, the basic document authorizing the division of national territory into military regions. In place of the military regions, Decree 98-QP established three tactical zones (*vung chien thuat*). The Capital Military District (*Quan khu Thu do*) became the Capital Special Zone (*Biet Khu Thu Do*).

The boundaries of the three new tactical zones (TZ's) and the Capital Special Zone were defined as follows:

I TZ: The boundaries of the former 2nd Military Region;
II TZ: The boundaries of the former 4th Military Region;

III TZ: The boundaries of the former 1st and 5th Military Regions and these of the Capital Special Zone.

The Capital Special Zone included the City of Saigon and Gia Dinh Province

H. Decree 213-QP of November 26, 1962

This decree modified Decree 98-QP of April 13, 1962. Major revisions were made in the boundaries of the tactical zones (*vung chien thuat*) and the country was divided into four (instead of three) such zones. The increase in the number of tactical zones from three to four was necessitated by the formation of IV Corps, which officially came into being on January 1, 1963.

The four tactical zones were:

I TZ -- Four provinces: Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam, and Quang Tin;

II TZ -- Six provinces: Quang Ngai, Kontum, Pleiku, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, and Phu Bon;

III TZ -- Sixteen provinces: Darlac, Quang Duc, Tuyen Duc, Khanh Hoa, Phuoc Long, Lam Dong, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, Binh Long, Phuoc Thanh, Long Khanh, Binh Tuy, Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, Bien Hoa, and Phuoc Tuy;

IV TZ -- Thirteen provinces and one island: Long An, Kien Tuong, Dinh Tuong, Kien Phong, Kien Hoa, Vinh Long, An Giang, Vinh Binh, Phong Dinh, Kien Giang, Chuong Thien, Ba Xuyen, An Xuyen, and Con Son Island.

The Capital Special Zone -- Saigon and Gia Dinh Province -- remained unchanged.

I. Decree 132-QP of October 25, 1963

The text of this decree has so far not been located. Overtaken by an event, the coup d'etat of November 1, 1963, the decree was never published in the Republic of Viet Nam's Official Journal. No copy of it has yet been located at the Defense Ministry or at the RVNAF Joint General Staff Headquarters. However, it has been possible to piece together many of the details from companion decrees that were published and from other available information. The changes called for in the decree appear to have gone into effect on November 1, 1963, the same day as the coup, and are believed to have included the following rearrangements of tactical zones:

-- Quang Ngai was transferred to I TZ from II TZ;

-- Darlac, Khanh Hoa, Quang Duc, Tuyen Duc, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, and Lam Doug were transferred to II TZ from III TZ;

-- Long An, Kien Tong, Dinh Tuong, and Kien Hoa were transferred to III TZ from IV TZ.

J. Decree 343-QL of October 22, 1964

This decree cancelled Decree 132-QP of October 25, 1963. It provided for four tactical zones (*zung chien thuat*), a Capital Special Zone (Biet khu Thu do), and a Rung Sat Special Zone. The zones were defined as follows

- I TZ -- Five provinces: Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai;
- II TZ -- Thirteen provinces; Kontum, Pleiku, Binh Dinh, Phu Bon, Darlac, Quang Duc, Tuyen Duc, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, Lam Doug, and Binh Tuy;
- III TZ -- Ten provinces: Phuoc Long, Binh Long, Phuoc Thanh, Long Khanh, Phuoc Tuy, Bien Hoa (less the districts of Quang Xuyen and Can Gio), Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, Hau Nghia, and Long An.
- IV TZ -- Fifteen provinces and one island: Kien Tuong, Dinh Tuong, Go Cong, Kien Hoa, Kien Phong, Chau Doc, An Giang, Vinh Long, Vinh Binh, Phong Dinh, Kien Giang, Chuong Thien, Ba Xuyen, Bac Lieu, An Xuyen, and Con Son Island;

Capital Special Zone: Saigon and Gia Dinh Province;

Rung Sat Special Zone: Quang Xuyen and Can Gio Districts of Bien Hoa Province.

K. Decree 124-QP of July 2, 1965

This decree changed the name "Capital Special Zone" (*Biet khu Thu do*) to "Capital Military Zone" (*Quan Khu Thu do*).

L. Decree 227-QP of December 9, 1965

The decree revised Decree 343-QL of October 27, 1964. The four tactical zones (*zung chien thuat*) were redefined as follows;

- I TZ -- Five provinces: Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai;
- II TZ -- Twelve provinces: Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Phu Bon, Kontum, Pleiku, Darlac, Khanh Hoa, Quang Duc, Tuyen Duc, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, and Lam Dong;
- III TZ -- Ten provinces: Phuoc Long, Binh Long, Binh Duong, Long Khanh, Binh Tuy, Phuoc Tuy, Bien Hoa (less the districts of Quang Xuyen and Can Gio), Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, and Long An;
- IV TZ -- Fifteen provinces: Kien Tuong, Dinh Tuong, Go Cong, Kien Hoa, Kien Phong, Vinh Long, Vinh Binh, Chau Doc, An Giang, Kien Giang, Phong Dinh, Chuong Thien, Bac Lieu, Ba Xuyen, and An Xuyen.

Specified as separate areas in the decree were the Capital Military Zone consisting of Saigon, Gia Dinh Province, and Con Son Island and the Rung Sat Special Zone consisting of Quang Xuyen and Can Gio Districts of Bien Hoa Province.

M Decree 130-SL/QP of July 18, 1966

With effect from June 7, 1966, the name "Capital Military Zone" (*Quan Khu Thu do*) was changed back to "Capital Special Zone" (*Biet khu Thu do*). The decree defined the Capital Special Zone as consisting of Saigon, Gia Dinh Province, and Con Son Island and made it part of the territory of the 3rd Tactical Zone (III TZ). It was further stipulated that the responsibility and authority of the Capital Special Zone would be limited to that of a sector. Apparently, at the time of the decree Quang Xuyen and Can Gio Districts, which together make up the Rung Sat Special Zone, were transferred from Bien Hoa Province to Gia Dinh Province. However, it has not been possible to find the decrees ordering this change.

N Decree 614b-TT/SL of July 1, 1970

This decree re-established a system of military regions and abolished the corps tactical zones (*vung chien thuat*) and tactical areas. However, each of the military regions (MRs) is the responsibility of a corps; thus

- I Corps is in charge of MR-1,
- II Corps is in charge of MR-2,
- III Corps is in charge of MR-3,
- IV Corps is in charge of MR-4.

The corps headquarters is at the same time the headquarters of the military region; the corps commander is also the military region commander.

Each corps/military region reports directly to the Joint General Staff of RVNAF. Each corps/military region is responsible for military operations in its area, territorial security, pacification (termed reconstruction and development since 1973) and various other matters. To this point, a position called the "Government Delegate" had existed in each Corps, theoretically equal in authority to that of the Corps Commander; the Delegate exercised the civilian authority of the Government. In practice, the Delegate's position was in each case cumulated by the Corps Commander, who was assisted in discharging this function by a senior civil servant who bore the title "Assistant to the Government Delegate". Until 1968, and depending upon the personalities involved, the Assistant in some instances was a fairly important figure. Following the impact of the Tet offensive in early 1968, whatever authority the Assistants had previously exercised rapidly eroded and the position was subsequently eliminated.

The military regions are defined as follows by the decree:

- MR-1 -- Fives provinces and two municipalities: Quang Tri, Thua Thien and the Hue Municipality, Quang Nam and the Da Nang Municipality, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai;
- MR-2 -- Twelve provinces and two municipalities: Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Phu Bon, Kontum, Pleiku, Darlac, Khanh Hoa and the Cam Ranh Municipality, Quang Duc, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, Lam Dong, and Tuyen Duc and the Dalat Municipality;
- MR-3 -- The City of Saigon, Con Son Island, eleven provinces, and one municipality: Phuoc Long, Binh Long, Binh Duong, Long Khanh, Binh Tuy, Phuoc Tuy and the Vung Tau Municipality, Bien Hoa, Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, Long An, and Gia Dinh. The Capital Special Zone is part of MR-3; however, it has its own system of territorial organization which, according to the decree, is to be fixed by "separate documents". The Capital Special Zone consists of the City of Saigon, Gia Dinh Sector (Province), and Con Son Island (a Special Sector). Quang Xuyen and Can Gia Districts of Gia Dinh Province comprise the subordinate Rung Sat Special Zone;
- MR-4 -- Sixteen provinces: Kien Tuoug, Dinh Tuong, Go Cong, Kien Hoa Kien Phong, Sa Dec, Vinh Long, Vinh Binh, Chau Doc, An Giang, Kien Giang, Phong Dinh, Chuong Thien, An Xuyen, Bac Lieu, and Ba Xuyen.

Since the promulgation of Decree 614b-TT/SL several new municipalities have been created. These actions have not resulted in the change of any military region boundaries.

As of February 1974, the following municipalities were in existence:

Saigon; Hue (MR-1); Da Nang (MR-1); Qui Nhon (MR-2); Nha Trang (MR-2); Dalat (MR-2); Cam Ranh (MR-2); Vung Tau (MR-3); My Tho (MR-4); Can Tho (MR-4); and Rach Gia (MR-4).

Saigon is viewed administratively as somewhat more than the equal of its peers. The city is referred to officially as "the Capital", and its Mayor is known as the "Capital Chief" (*Do Truong*). Mayors of the other municipalities are referred to as "municipality chiefs" (*thi truong*).

MARTIN

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