

CHAPTER II
1964 - 1965
SAW THE SAME WAR
WITH A BIG DIFFERENCE

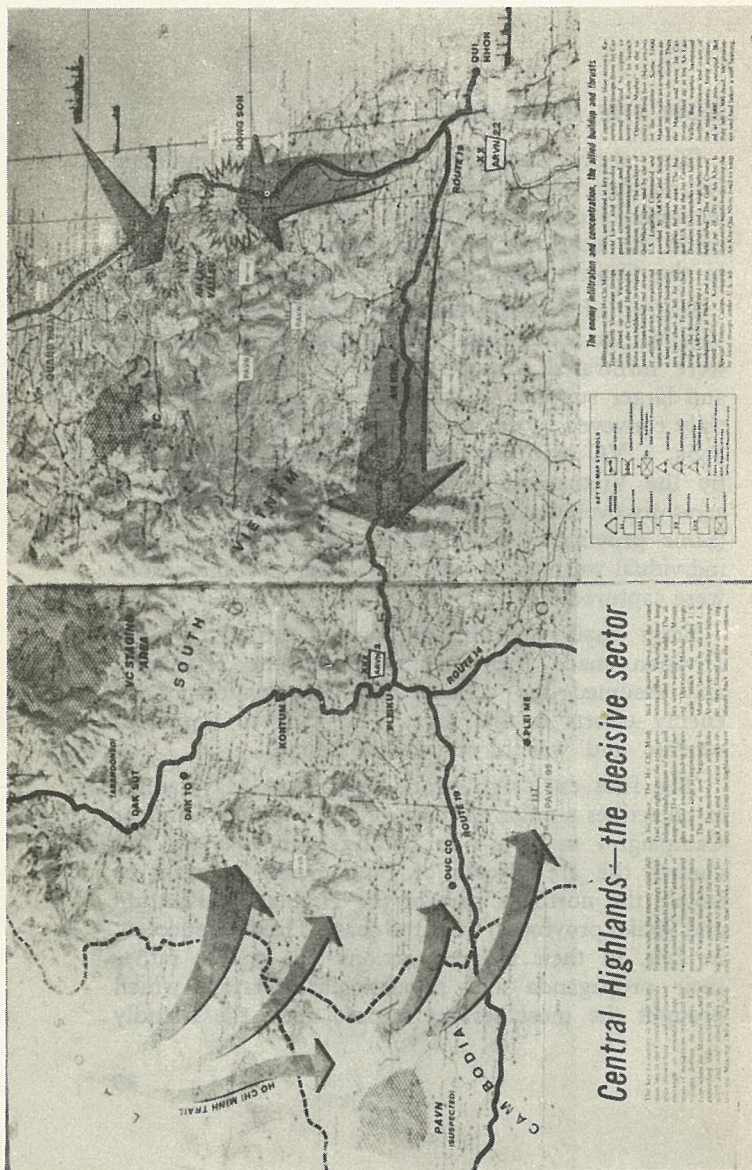
NOW THE REGULARS

The above statement, from a French military commander who himself has experienced the fierce vicissitudes of deadly combat and guerrilla warfare, could be used to best summarize what happened in the Central Highlands at the beginning of 1964.

Instead of separate teams of cadres sent to South Viet Nam to activate units on the spot, whole regiments were infiltrated through the « Hồ Chí Minh » trail and larger supplies of weapons and equipment stealthily conveyed by sea to secret bases. On 16 February 1965, a VC ship was sunk at Vung Ro (Phu Yên) by the Vietnamese Navy and numerous caches of arms discovered at Đá Bia by the 23rd ARVN Division (same province) : more than 2000 crew-served and individual weapons as well as 73 tons of ammunitions were captured. 65

Early 1956, the Headquarters of the 325th NVA Division made their apparition in the Highlands and assumed the control and coordination of all enemy efforts in the area. The shift to positional warfare and war of movement began.

The first campaign (from January to May) aimed at objectives similar to those of the « Winter-Summer Campaign » in 1954 : to paralyze Highway 19 and control the area North of Binh Định, in order to isolate the northern part of the Highlands (Kontum and Pleiku provinces) from the coast. They did succeed, in fact, in their military actions but it was rather their propaganda and psychological warfare which brought the most serious impact upon the friendly



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situation, especially when by June, Highways 21 and 19 Bis also fell under their control. Without exaggeration, it could be said that by the first days of July, the three northern provinces in the Highlands — Pleiku, Kontum and Phú Bôn — had degenerated into chaos and it seemed that, barring a miracle, nothing could appease the panic among the local population.

CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

In this deplorable conjuncture, there remains only one certainty: the Highlands were to be defended, at any cost, unless a sinister decision had been made to give up fighting and surrender. The disaster in 1954 were never to be repeated.

This determination of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam was expressed in the following concept and decision taken by second Army Corps Commander:

- 1) To stimulate the troops and population by a large-scale deployment of friendly forces and by reopening the main supply routes leading into the Highlands from the coast.
- 2) To scatter the enemy pressure and break the belt they were tightening around friendly positions by accepting the enemy challenge: the war shall be waged even in handicapped conditions for friendly forces.
- 3) To check the enemy expansion by vigorous and immediate counter-attacks against any new enemy thrusts.

large campaigns were conducted because previous separate attacks had allowed the ARVN to get out of their difficulties by a methodic and appropriate maneuver of forces, although they had only limited capabilities.

The remedy thus consisted of the following requirements :

- 1) Launching of a large campaign encompassing several attacks in different directions. The ARVN forces would be compelled to disperse and could not adequately meet the difficulties encountered.
- 2) Such a campaign conducted in accordance with the tactics « one point and two faces » (1) would surely confuse the ARVN analysis and estimate about the impact of the VC main effort. The « point » would be selected in such a manner that ARVN forces could not avoid handicaps and disadvantages, unless the challenge was not accepted.

(1) Literal translation of the so-called « nhất điểm lưỡng diện » tactics of the VC in the offense. The expression simply means either « one main effort and two secondary efforts » or « one main attack and two diversionary attacks ».

**MAJOR OPERATIONS IN II CORPS TACTICAL ZONE
IN THE 1965 RAINY SEASON**

NAME	TIME	PLACE	VIET CONG LOSSES					Miscellaneous Captured
			KIA	CIA	Weapons Crew: Individ- served/Total	DESTROYED		
DAN TIEN 107	29 June 1 July	Thuan Man (Phu Bon)	123	2	16	26		
THAN PHONG 1	16 to 25 July	Highway 19	33		1	16	2 ammo caches 431 houses 10 tons of rice	
DAN THANG 7	3 to 18 August	Duc Co	566	26	12	94	2 MG 80 CAL 2 MORT 81mm	2 Barrels MG and Mortar
THAN PHONG 3	19 August 2 Sept	Highway 21	124	14	31		882 houses	1 AN/PRC 25
QUYET THANG 165-169	23 Sept. 2 Oct.	Phu Cu, Bong Son, Phu Ly (Binh Dinh)	1100		44	44		4 MG Barrels
THAN PHONG 5 and 6	20 to 24 October	North Binh Dinh	125	10	5	16	1 Training Center 5 tons of rice 100 kg of dry fish 20 BUNKERS	35 TONS of rice