
WAR FRONT

GRAPHIC GUIDE

GALLERY COPY

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE

WAR FRONT



IV CORPS

IV Corps, the southernmost of the four tactical zones and the location of the Mekong Delta, was crisscrossed with more than 3,000 nautical miles of rivers, canals, and streams. It was home to more than one-third of South Vietnam's population. Roads were rare; almost everyone traveled in sampans or other small boats. Flooded annually, the region was fertile and productive, particularly for rice. It was also a longtime Viet Cong (VC) stronghold.

1. OPERATIONS MARKET TIME & GAME WARDEN

U.S. Navy ships in the ocean and river network stop and search civilian fishing vessels to thwart enemy movement of troops and supplies. Operation Market Time surveils and halts infiltration via the coastal waters of the South China Sea. Operation Game Warden performs the same duty in the Mekong Delta's interior rivers and canals.

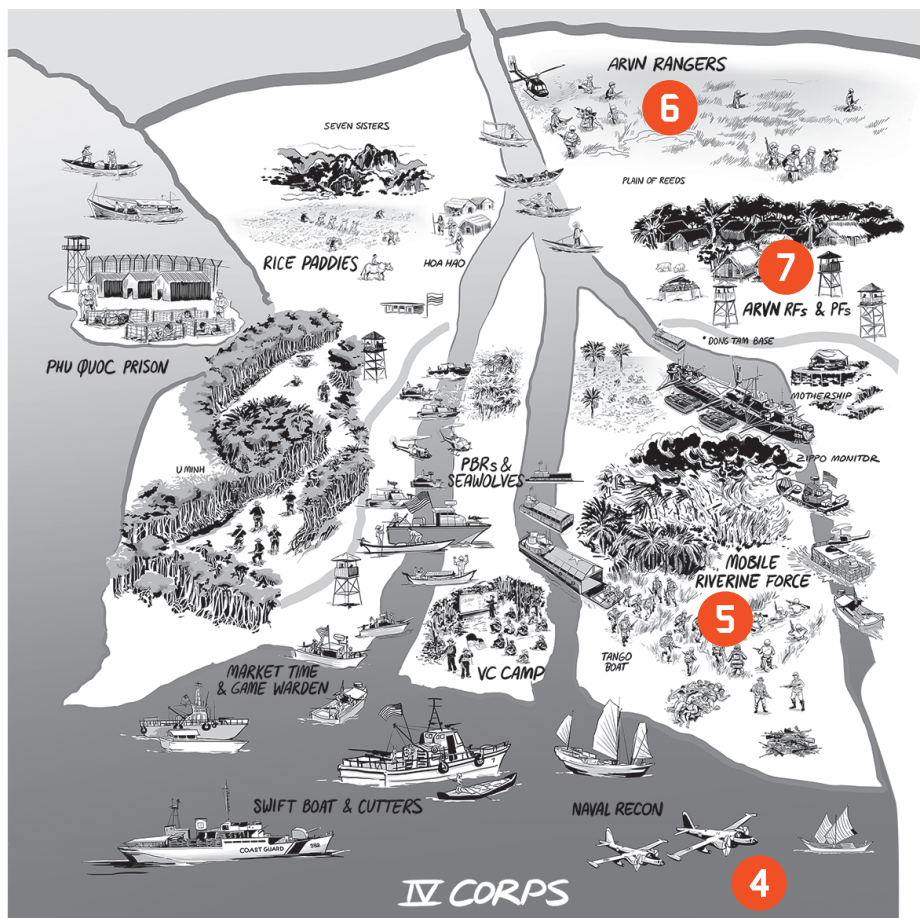
2. SWIFT BOATS & CUTTERS

U.S. Navy swift boats and Coast Guard cutters patrol off the coast in Operation Market Time. Searching for contraband such as weapons and explosives, they may stop and board any civilian boat within a designated area from the coast.

3. PBRs & SEAWOLVES

U.S. Navy PBRs (short for Patrol Boat, River) roam the Mekong Delta day and night, operating in pairs. Navy helicopter gunships, called Seawolves, patrol overhead, providing intelligence and air support. PBR crews inspect vessels, enforce curfews, and participate in night ambushes.

WAR FRONT



4. NAVAL RECONNAISSANCE

U.S. Navy P-2 Neptune aircraft patrol as part of Operation Market Time, alerting U.S. ships to suspicious activity.

5. MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE

The U.S. Navy crew of a Tango boat (ATC) lands U.S. Army troops on a search and destroy mission. They all belong to the Mobile Riverine Force (MRF)—an Army-Navy amphibious task force charged with striking against the VC in the Mekong Delta. Violent clashes occur frequently in this heavily populated region where many support the insurgency.

The mural also shows a napalm-spraying monitor, known as the “battleship” of the MRF; a barracks ship that could berth 800 troops; and a specially equipped Tango boat modified to include a helicopter landing pad.

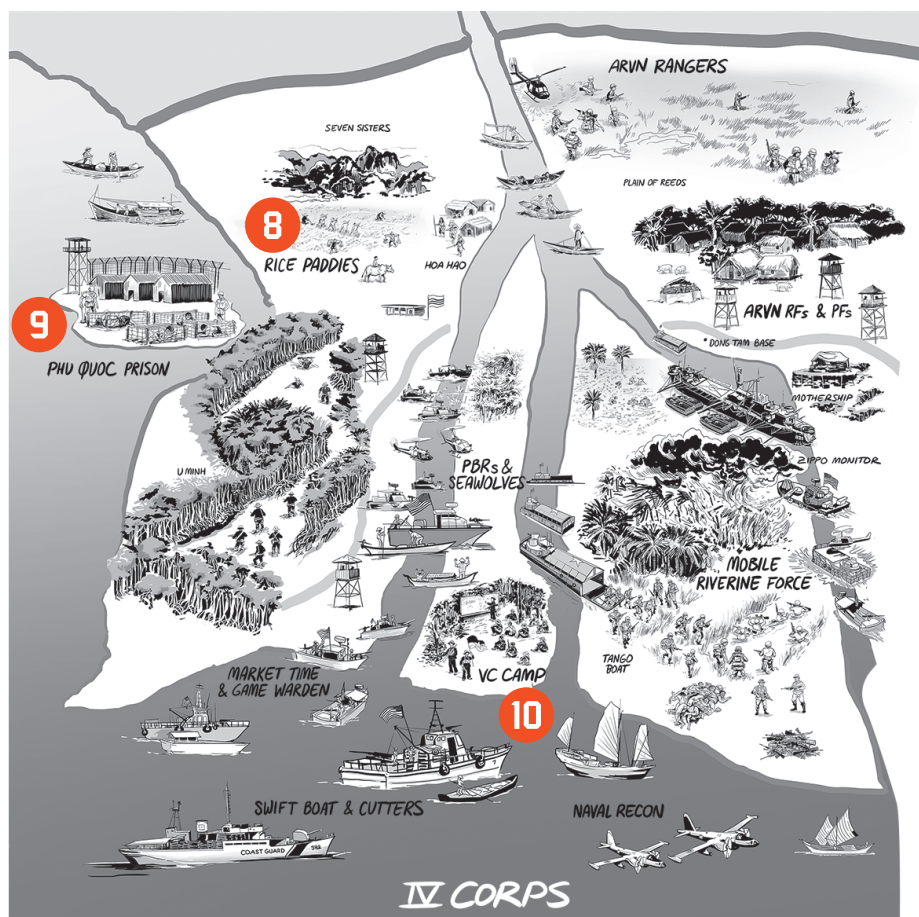
6. ARVN RANGERS

Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Rangers look for the VC in the large, swampy region known as the Plain of Reeds. Called the Black Tigers, these elite South Vietnamese units engage in high-risk operations throughout the country.

7. ARVN RFS & PFS

ARVN “Ruff Puffs” monitor their surroundings from watchtowers along critical canals and roads. The Regional Forces (RFs) and Popular Forces (PFs) are local militia units. Making up about half of ARVN’s strength, the units play a critical role in pacification efforts. Equipped with older weapons like M-1 carbines, they regularly engage the Viet Cong in the villages and suffer high casualty rates.

WAR FRONT



8. RICE PADDIES

Farmers work in the rice paddies that cover much of the Mekong Delta—an area known as the “rice bowl.” Rice is a food staple, so cultivation cannot stop, even as fighting comes directly into the paddies. In 1966, the war interrupts South Vietnam’s rice production so dramatically that rice has to be imported for the first time.

9. PHU QUOC PRISON

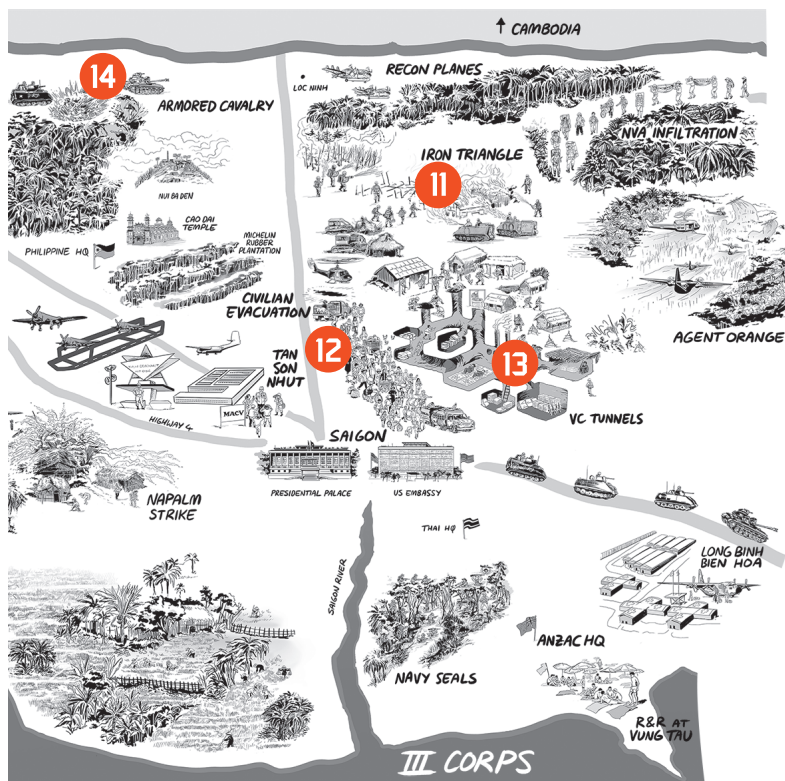
Phu Quoc prison is located on Phu Quoc Island. Opened in 1967, it is the largest of South Vietnam’s prisoner of war camps, confining North Vietnamese troops and South Vietnamese suspected of being Viet Cong.

The South Vietnamese government runs the POW camps. Each also has a small team of U.S. military police advisers. Reports on Phu Quoc by the Red Cross reveal evidence of torture and abuse. A 1970 congressional delegation to the prison on Con Son Island finds people of all ages penned up in “tiger cages” that house multiple prisoners and are too small for standing.

10. VIET CONG CAMP

A Communist political officer stands at a chalkboard instructing and motivating VC troops. The Mekong Delta had been a stronghold for Ho Chi Minh’s Viet Minh in the war against French colonialism. The region remains at the heart of the southern insurgency. Peasants who side with or belong to the Viet Cong see the VC as the successor to the Viet Minh, and support the struggle against the Americans and the South Vietnamese government.

WAR FRONT



III CORPS

III Corps was located between the Mekong Delta and the Central Highlands. International forces from Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines made their bases here. Saigon, the capital, was the center of power for the Republic of Vietnam and U.S. command. Outside Saigon, the Viet Cong (VC) stayed active.

11. IRON TRIANGLE

U.S. and ARVN soldiers target the Iron Triangle—a VC stronghold near Saigon—in Operation Cedar Falls, January 1967. Troops seize suspected guerillas, evacuate residents, raze villages with flamethrowers and bulldozers, and try to destroy the VC's underground tunnels.

12. CIVILIAN EVACUATION

In January 1967, Operation Cedar Falls descends on the village of Ben Suc. A helicopter speaker blares: "Attention! Do not run away or you will be shot as VC." After weeding out suspected VC and destroying the village, U.S. and ARVN troops evacuate civilians to an empty field where no camp has yet been built.

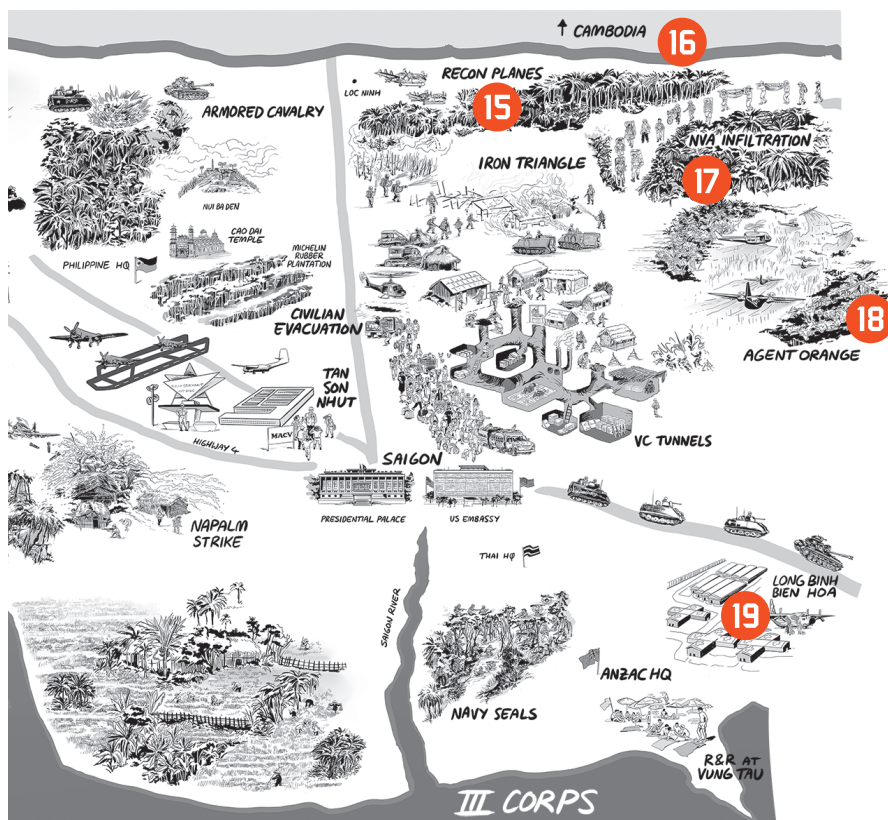
13. VIET CONG TUNNELS

American troops target the tunnels in the Iron Triangle. After discovering the camouflaged entrances, U.S. Army "tunnel rats" enter and search the narrow passageways. The VC's tunnel system offers protection against American sweeps and bombs, and contains rudimentary bunkers, classrooms, storerooms, and other spaces.

14. ARMORED CAVALRY

U.S. M-48 tanks and M-113 armored personnel carriers (APCs) watch for VC and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers carrying rocket-propelled grenade launchers—shoulder-fired weapons that can disable or destroy armored vehicles. Tanks are often used in sweeps and ambushes. APCs, or "tracks," carry troops and wield considerable firepower.

WAR FRONT



15. RECONNAISSANCE PLANES

Two OV-1 Mohawk aircraft scout for NVA and VC activity. Their reports help U.S. military leaders decide where to send troops.

16. CAMBODIA

Cambodia's ruler, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, tries to keep his country neutral despite the significant presence of NVA troops and base camps along the border.

17. NVA INFILTRATION

In 1967, at least 60,000 North Vietnamese troops enter South Vietnam using the Ho Chi Minh Trail. North Vietnamese rear service personnel, numbering tens of thousands of men and women, work to keep the trail open.

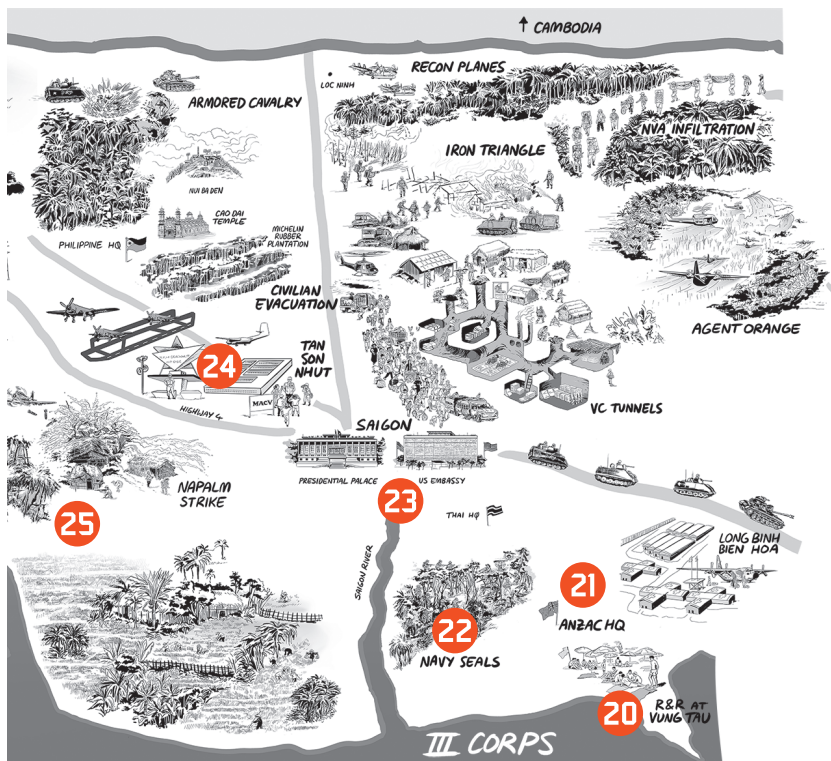
18. SPRAYING AGENT ORANGE

U.S. C-123 planes spray Agent Orange, a toxic defoliant, across jungles and fields. Operation Ranch Hand aims to deny the enemy hiding spots and destroy their food supply. In 1967, the United States sprays 4.8 million gallons of the chemical, damaging more than a million acres of foliage. "Spray drift" sends the toxic chemicals to unintended spots, including populated areas.

19. LONG BINH / BIEN HOA

The sprawling logistical base at Long Binh serves as a major command center for U.S. military forces in III Corps. Thousands of support troops distribute supplies and mail, handle logistics, repair equipment, and perform other tasks. Nearby Bien Hoa Air Base houses most of III Corps' strike aircraft. Many troops also begin their tour of duty here.

WAR FRONT



20. R & R AT VUNG TAU

U.S. troops rest and recuperate at Vung Tau, having received brief R & R leave as a reward for performance. For every one-year tour of duty, troops receive a week's R & R in places such as Hawaii, Taipei, and Bangkok.

21. ANZAC HQ

Eight thousand troops from Australia and New Zealand (ANZAC) assist the United States and South Vietnam. They patrol, conduct search and destroy missions, and provide civic aid.

22. NAVY SEALS

Small amphibious teams of Navy SEALs waded through the swampy Rung Sat region. In this VC stronghold, the SEALs protect the main shipping channel to Saigon by setting up ambushes and capturing enemy leaders for interrogation.

23. SAIGON

A key port city and the capital, Saigon sees its population swell during the war to four million. It is the war's nerve center—home to the Republic of Vietnam's Presidential Palace and the American embassy.

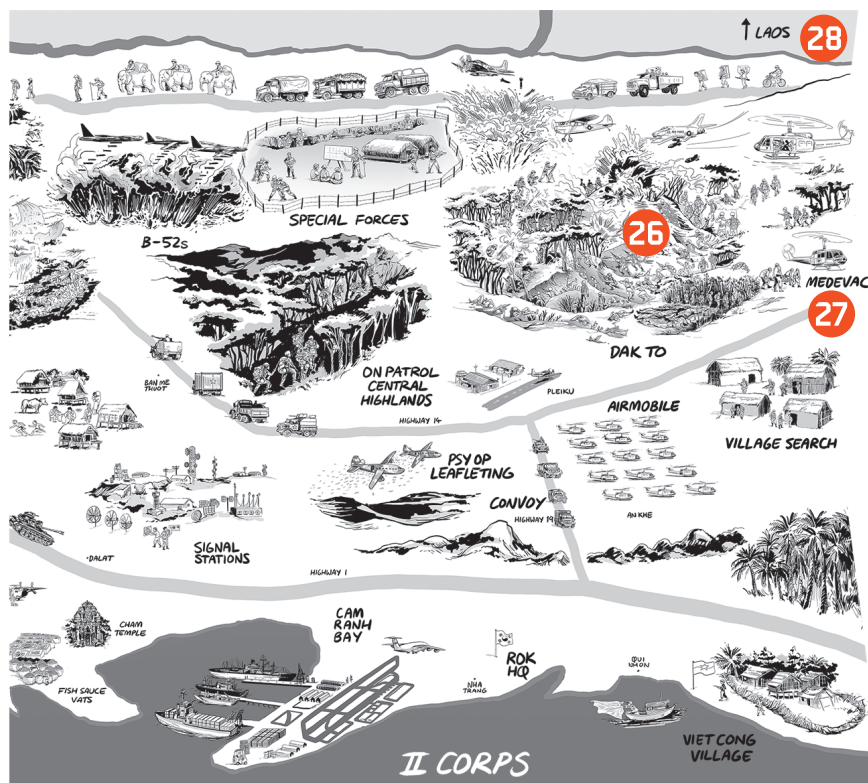
24. TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE

General William Westmoreland, head of the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), talks to the press about the war. A principal command and control center, Tan Son Nhut houses MACV HQ (known as Pentagon East) and South Vietnam's equivalent Joint General Staff.

25. NAPALM STRIKE

U.S. soldiers firing at VC positioned in a village call for close air support. The villagers flee or try to hide. A plane drops canisters of napalm—a thickened fuel designed to stick to skin—that incinerate everything in the vicinity. During the war, aircraft drop roughly 400,000 tons of U.S. napalm bombs on South Vietnam. A typical strike incinerates an area longer than two football fields.

WAR FRONT



II CORPS

Sizeable II Corps contained 12 provinces. American, South Vietnamese, and South Korean forces carried out search and destroy missions in and around the heavily populated villages of the lowlands where there was deep support for the Viet Cong (VC). In the mountainous Central Highlands—home to indigenous tribespeople known as Montagnards—Allied troops tried to block North Vietnamese infiltration.

26. DAK TO

North Vietnamese troops draw U.S. soldiers into the hills and triple-canopy jungle surrounding Dak To in November 1967. From protected bunkers and spider holes, the NVA fires rocket-propelled grenades and mortars at U.S. troops who struggle up steep hills. U.S. artillery blasts enemy positions, and fighter planes drop bombs and napalm. The battle claims the lives of some 280 Americans, 100 South Vietnamese, and 1,600 North Vietnamese.

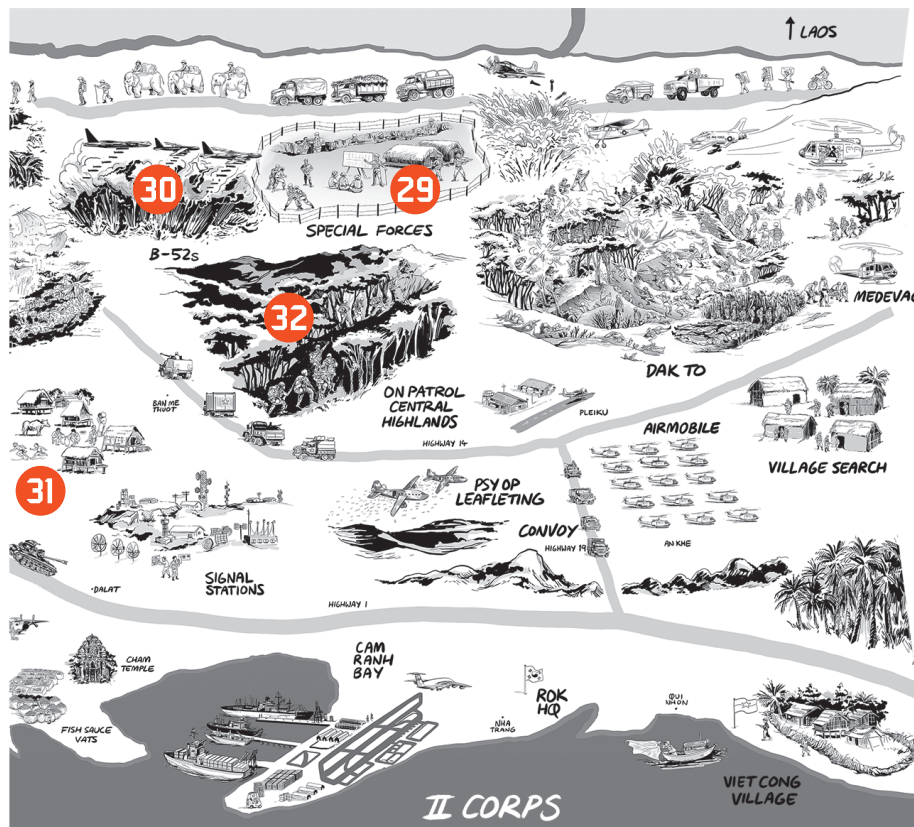
27. UH-1 HUEY EVACUATING WOUNDED

Huey helicopters flying medevac (medical evacuation) missions—nicknamed “dustoffs” for the debris kicked up during takeoff—arrive to pick up the wounded.

28. LAOS

Though officially neutral, Laos is deeply enmeshed in the Vietnam War. The CIA secretly trains and deploys the local Hmong people to fight Communist advances in Laos. U.S. planes regularly bomb Laos to disrupt North Vietnamese use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

WAR FRONT



29. SPECIAL FORCES

U.S. Special Forces, stationed at a remote outpost, train South Vietnam's highland tribesmen to patrol the border against NVA infiltration. The tribesmen—collectively known as Montagnards—defend their villages, scout around the camps, and provide intelligence on enemy activity.

30. B-52 BOMBING

A trio of huge B-52 Stratofortress bombers flies in from Guam or Thailand to target enemy base camps and supply lines. Each strike decimates a swath of territory the size of the National Mall in Washington, DC.

31. MONTAGNARD VILLAGE

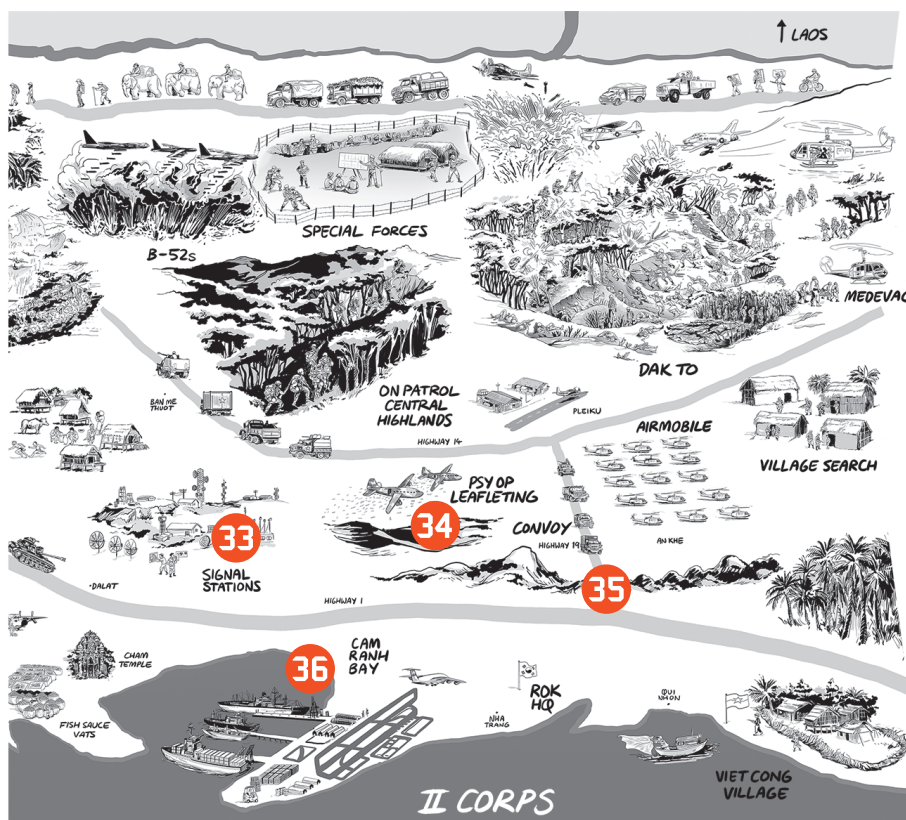
Montagnards—indigenous tribespeople of the Central Highlands—live in relative independence. Their location in strategic II Corps makes their collaboration valuable to both sides. It also exposes them to ferocious artillery and aerial bombardment.

32. ON PATROL, CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

U.S. troops patrol the remote triple-canopy jungle in search of North Vietnamese. G.I.s call it “humping the boonies.” One soldier recalls,

“A day seemed like a week. You walked all day and slept part of the night. You were amazed that all day you humped the hills with those packs and only a little to eat.”

WAR FRONT



33. SIGNAL STATIONS

The U.S. Army Signal Corps builds radio stations throughout South Vietnam. Located on the highest mountains, they operate as relay stations, allowing units within the country to communicate with each other and with the United States.

34. PSYOP LEAFLETING

The leaflets being dropped from these airplanes advertise the Chieu Hoi program, which offers incentives for NVA and VC troops to defect. U.S. Psychological Operations (PSYOP) distributes billions of leaflets to bolster the Saigon government.

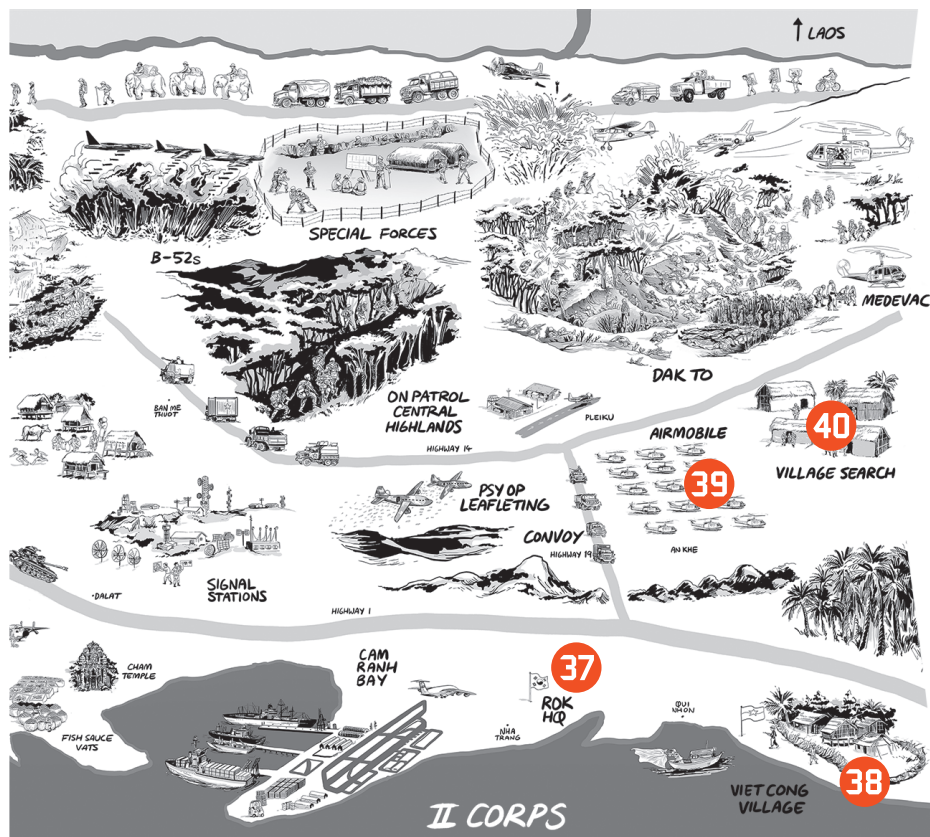
35. CONVOY

A convoy travels daily between Pleiku and Qui Nhon to supply the troops. Cargo trucks carry food, ammunition, jet fuel, gas, and more. Operating on long and exposed roads, they are defended by gun trucks, tanks, and armored personnel carriers (APCs).

36. CAM RANH BAY

A natural deep-water port, Cam Ranh Bay is the logistical hub for southern II Corps, and one of the country's largest air bases. This vast, American-built complex includes cargo-ship piers, generator ships, 10,000 ft. long airstrips, rows of warehouses, oil tank farms, a hospital, and barracks for nearly 20,000 men.

WAR FRONT



37. ROK HQ

The 45,000-strong South Korean force in Nha Trang is the largest international contingent allied with the United States and South Vietnam. They conduct search and destroy operations and organize ambushes in nearby VC-dominated areas.

38. VIET CONG VILLAGE

VC guerillas guard a village whose population supports the insurgency and has resisted pacification by government troops. Throughout the war, the VC maintain a strong presence in areas like Binh Dinh Province, where many have opposed government authorities since the French Indochina War.

39. AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS

The 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) maintains its large airfield of helicopters at An Khe. Helicopter crews ferry supplies, track the enemy, engage in combat, and transport troops, reporters, civilian aides, and entertainers. The Army doctrine of air mobility uses helicopters, of various sizes and designs, to flexibly and quickly respond to enemy initiatives.

40. VILLAGE SEARCH

A report of enemy activity sends U.S. soldiers into a village. Villagers cannot escape the war, even if they do not take sides. U.S. troops search their homes for supplies and suspected VC. ARVN interrogates them and drafts their sons. The VC recruits members, seeks shelter, and requires food. "Whoever won, the people always lost," a poet later writes.

WAR FRONT



I CORPS

I Corps, the northernmost of the four tactical zones, covered five provinces. Here, Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and U.S. troops under 3rd Marine Amphibious Force battled the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and in the remote highlands. They also fought NVA and local Viet Cong (VC) soldiers in the populous coastal plains.

41. SIEGE OF CON THIEN

From September to October 1967, the North Vietnamese target the Marine base in Con Thien with endless rounds of rockets, mortars, and artillery shells, launched from across the DMZ. The massive U.S. response involves artillery units, strike aircraft, and warships in the South China Sea. Both sides suffer heavy casualties. Marines call Con Thien the “Meat Grinder.”

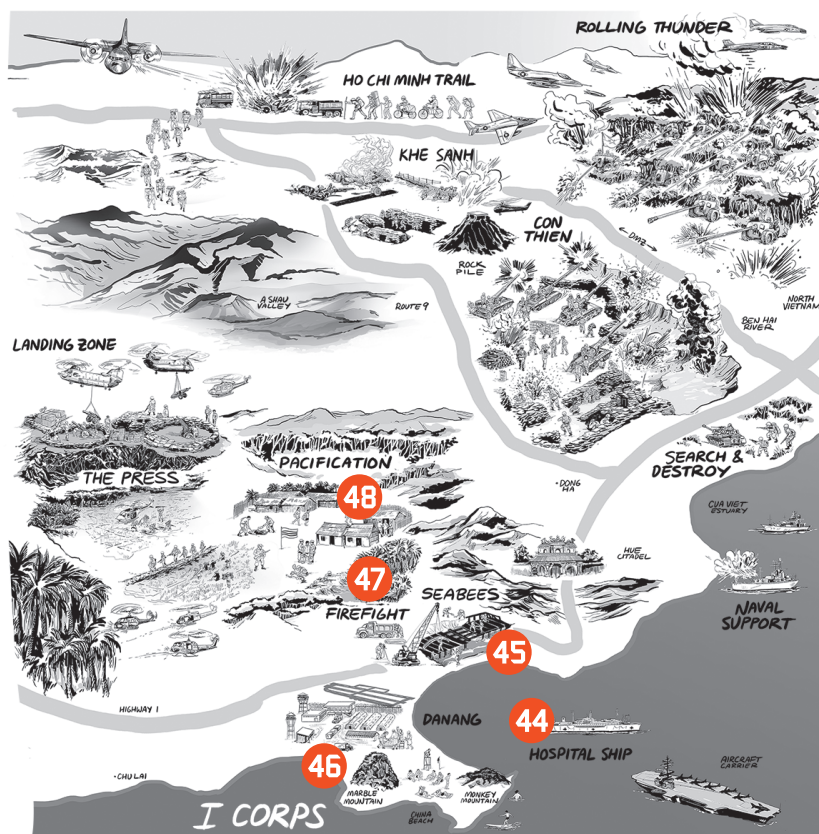
42. SEARCH AND DESTROY MISSION

U.S. Marines go on a search and destroy mission to locate North Vietnamese soldiers who cross the DMZ to attack shipping in the Cua Viet Estuary. Search and destroy patrols take place throughout South Vietnam. The overall purpose is to locate and kill the enemy, stop the insurgency, and bring the countryside under government control. Identifying the enemy is difficult. There are no front lines, and the guerillas look no different than civilians. This situation presents enormous danger for all involved.

43. NAVAL SUPPORT

U.S. Navy cruisers and destroyers support Allied units near the DMZ. Their firepower can reach one-third of the land in I Corps.

WAR FRONT



44. HOSPITAL SHIP

Wounded servicemen can be evacuated directly from the battlefield to this hospital ship, the USS *Repose*, where they are cared for by U.S. Navy doctors and nurses. The ship has 750 beds and is equipped with advanced surgical and care facilities.

45. SEABEES

U.S. Navy Seabees repair a bridge near the Hai Van Pass along Highway 1. Seabees—short for Construction Battalions—build a massive military infrastructure throughout South Vietnam, frequently working in the midst of hostile action.

46. DANANG

Danang serves as a major port, air base, and logistical and command center for U.S. Marines and ARVN in I Corps. Service personnel on short R & R leave flock to nearby China Beach.

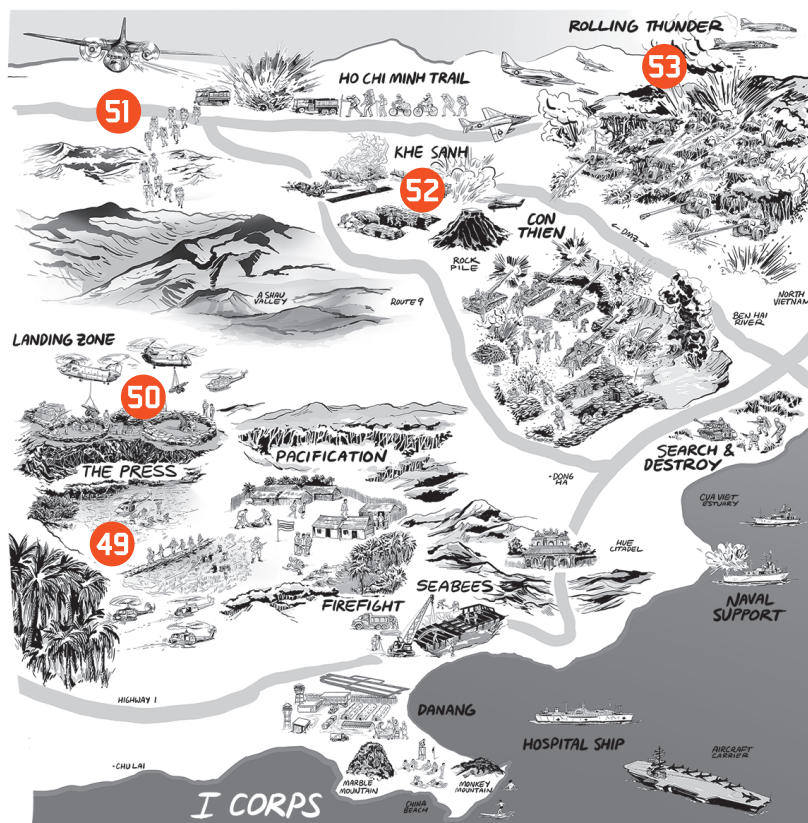
47. FIREFIGHT

Firefights can start in an instant. “Suddenly, all hell breaks loose,” remembers a veteran. “You can hear the AKs opening up and it doesn’t sound like our machine guns. It was a roar—this awful, grinding roar that just went on and on.”

48. VILLAGE PACIFICATION

An ARVN Revolutionary Development team digs a well for a village defended by a U.S. Marine Combined Action Platoon (CAP). CAP units live full time in rural hamlets, and are charged with organizing the communities, driving out the Viet Cong, and winning hearts and minds.

WAR FRONT



49. THE PRESS

A photojournalist lands with the troops and follows them into action. More than in any war before or since, the press in Vietnam operates free from U.S. government censorship and control on their movements. One reporter recounts, “If you had a press pass in Vietnam, it was a free travel ticket all over the country. It gave a fantastic freedom to see what you wanted to see.”

50. LANDING ZONE

A CH-47 Chinook carries supplies and a 105-millimeter howitzer to a landing zone (LZ) on a hill overlooking the Que Son Valley. From their vantage points on the high ground, artillery batteries provide direct fire support for infantry units operating in the valleys.

51. HO CHI MINH TRAIL

A U.S. AC-47 gunship targets North Vietnamese trucks and bicycles traveling along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. North Vietnamese soldiers and civilians brave gunships and extensive bombing to send troops, weapons, and supplies southward on this jungle-covered network of roads. “We kept the enemy from discovering us by camouflaging our trucks,” a female driver explains.

52. KHE SANH MARINE BASE

In the spring and fall of 1967, the 3rd Marines and North Vietnamese troops engage in fierce hill fighting around Khe Sanh. This remote base forms the western end of General Westmoreland’s defensive system against enemy entering South Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

53. OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER

A pair of F-105 Thunderchief fighter-bombers fly from U.S. air bases in Thailand to bomb military and industrial targets in North Vietnam. Operation Rolling Thunder (1965–68) drops nearly 650,000 tons of bombs on North Vietnam.