

An analysis of 1ATF operations

Never Stand Still

Research Team:

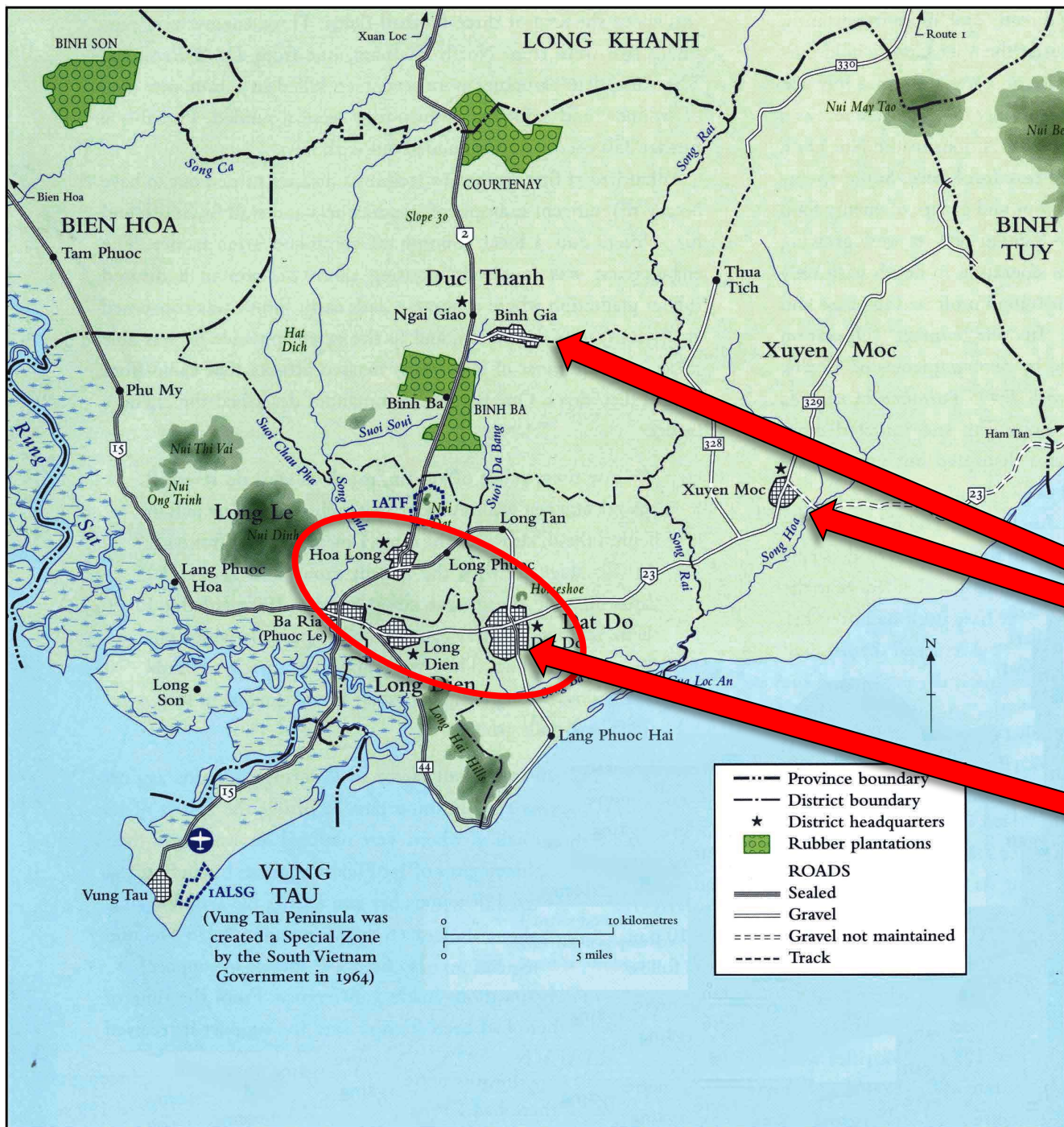
Bob Hall,
Andrew Ross,
Amy Griffin,
Peter Kimberley
Derrill de Heer



South Vietnam

Areas of major
US Army and
Marine Corps
combat.

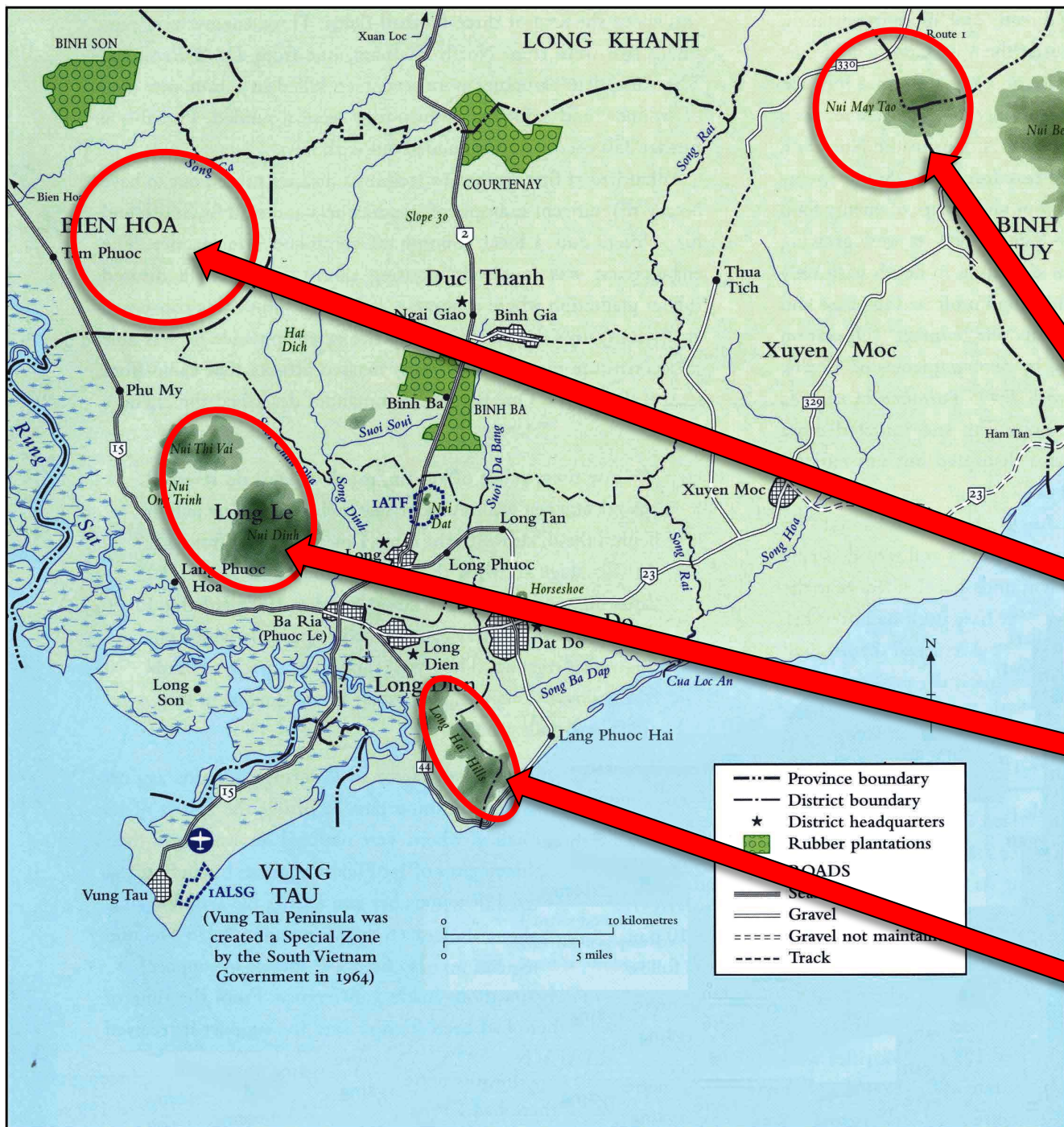
Phuoc Tuy province



Phuoc Tuy

Major outlying villages

Main population and rice production centre



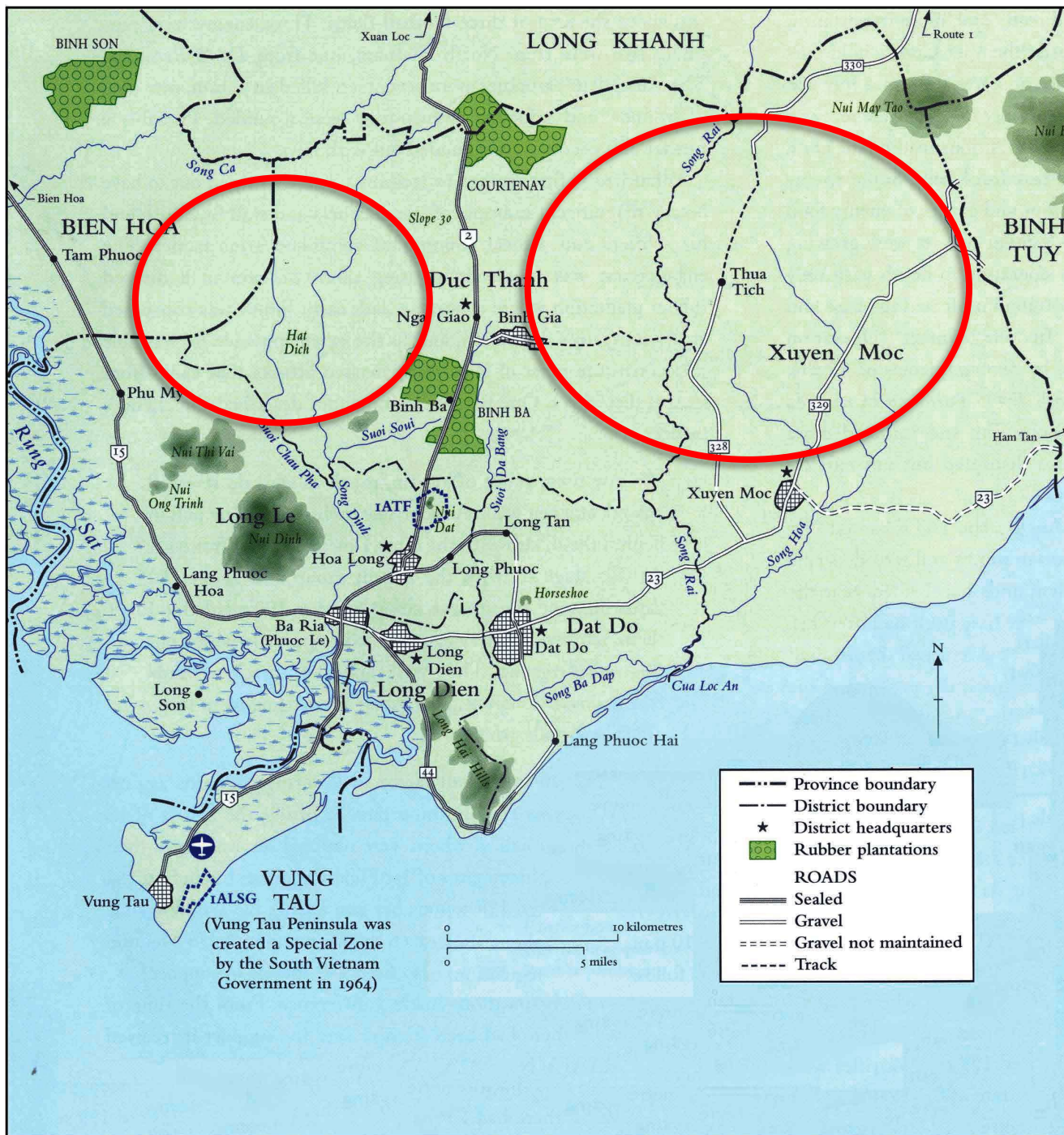
Phuoc Tuy

May Tao

Hat Dich

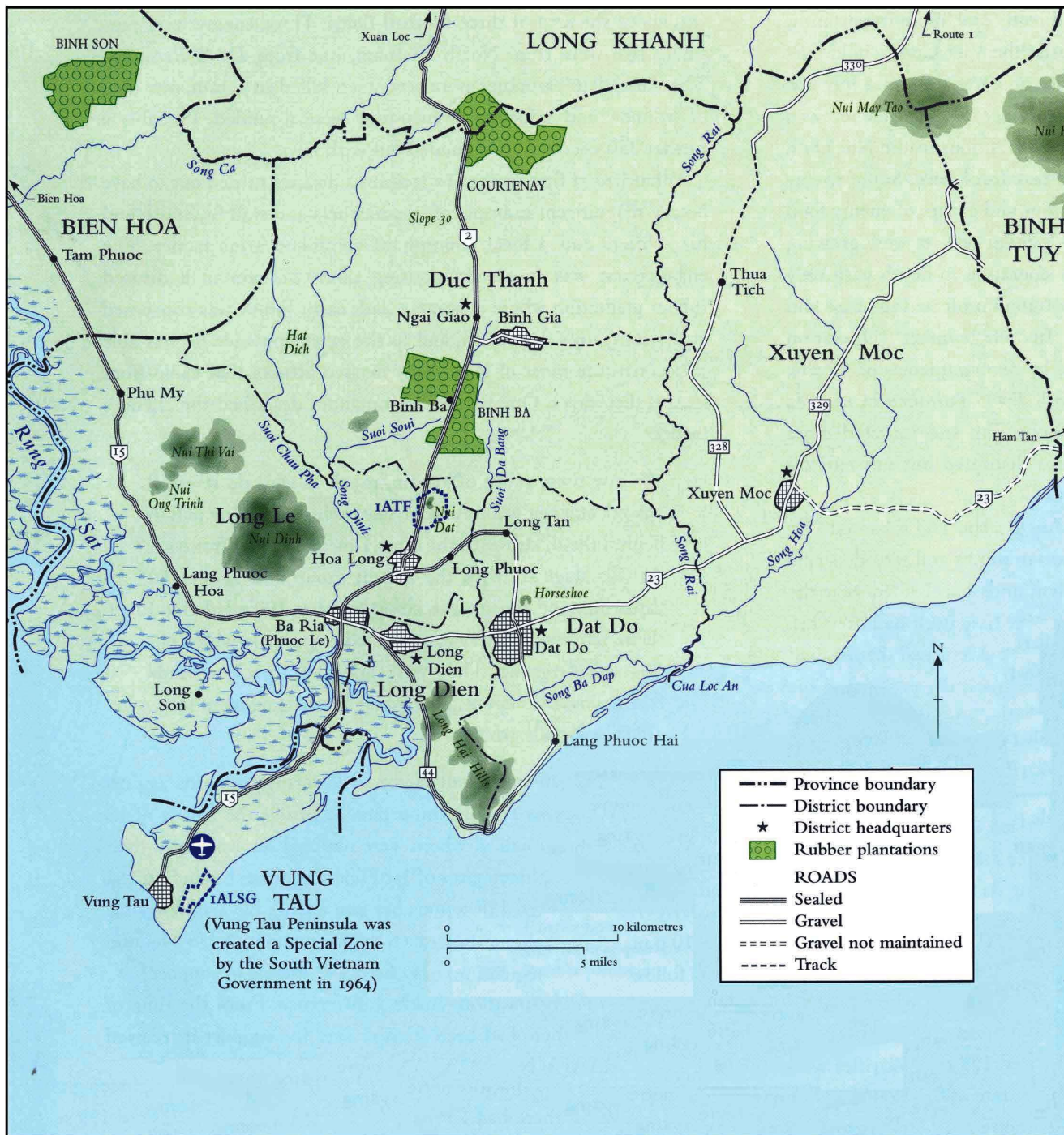
Nui Dinh,
Nui Thi Vai

Long Hais
(Minh Dam
Secret Zone)



Phuoc Tuy

Large, jungle-covered manoeuvre areas



Phuoc Tuy

Mapping the data

The Vietnam Combat Database: Paper records ...

CONFIDENTIAL

ENCLOSURE 4 TO
8 RAR COMBAT OPS
AFTER ACTION REPORT

CONTACT AFTER ACTION REPORT OF KEPERRA

Part 1

1. Report by No 38520 Sgt D.H.JUCKEL, 8 RAR, A Coy, 3 Pl.
2. Date/Time of contact was 271547H, at grid location of YS345637
3. Duration of (i) Firefight: 10 mins, for a total of 10 mins.
4. Description of contact, including task and events prior to contact and friendly/enemy reaction. Include sketch.

The task was to do a recon-in-force of the western side of the re-entrant at the above grid reference. We discovered bunker-signs and shook out in extended line from the top of the ridge to the creek. The enemy initiated the contact with 2-3 claymores and 1 RPG. followed by long bursts of 2-5 AK47s. The section 2IC was only four feet from the claymore, which was badly sighted.

5. Description of the terrain and canopy, including estimated ranges of visibility.

Steep and rocky with a poor visibility of 5-7 metres.

6. Who was the first to see the enemy (names not required; insert fwd scout, MG No 1, etc as applicable.) - The fwd scout.
7. Distance to the enemy when first sighted was 20 metres.



Databases

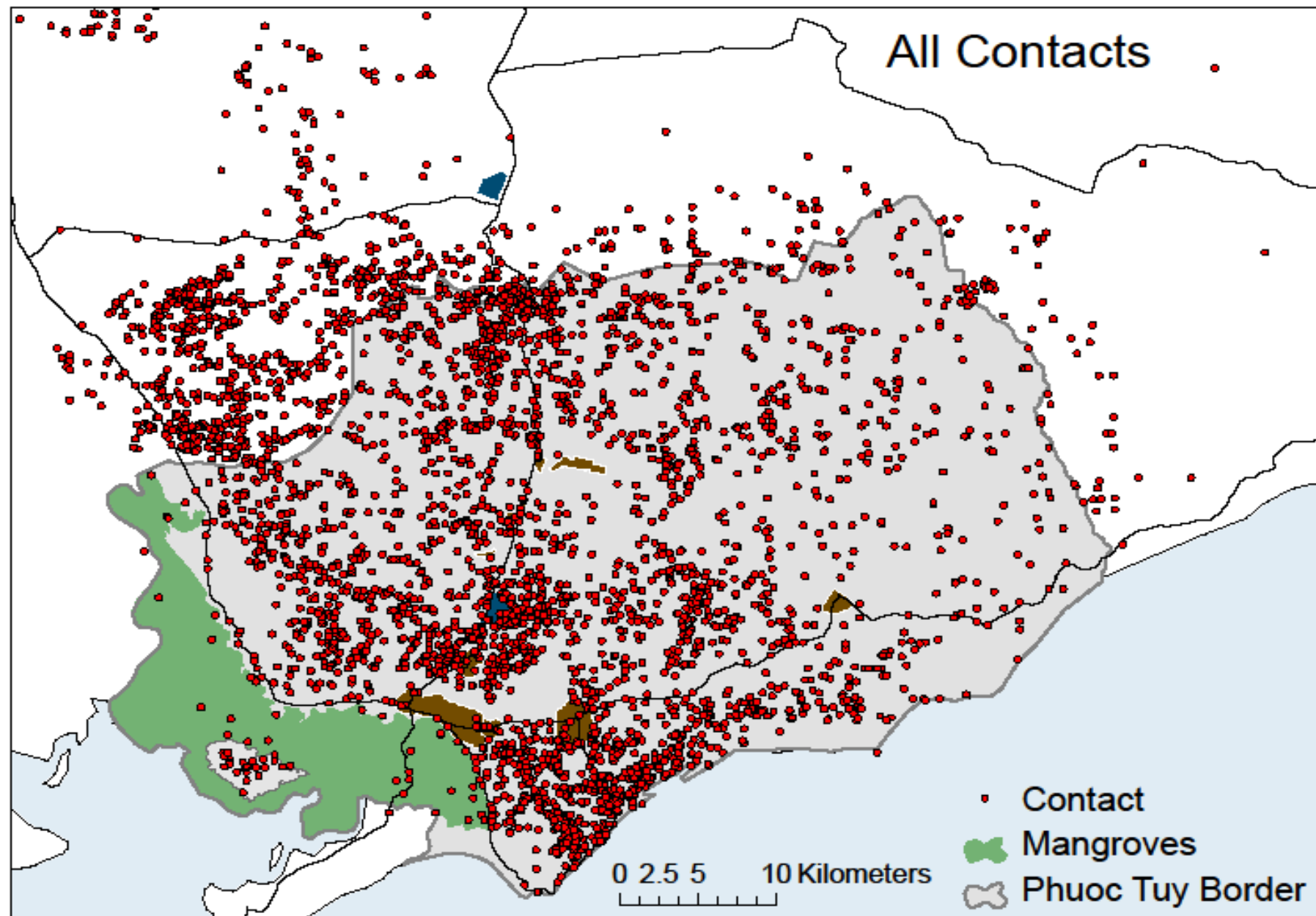
Contact reports

After every combat incident

About 30 questions

Vietnam Combat Database

- 4500 combat incidents (3909 contacts)
- Up to 30 bits of info on each





'Big battles' and the 'contacts' compared

'The Big Battles'

- Long Tan, Op Bribie, Baria/Long Dien, Long Dien 2, Coral, Balmoral, Binh Ba, Nui Le, etc.
 - 16 'big battles' in all.
 - Carefully planned over lengthy periods.
 - Enemy prepared the battlefield.
 - 'Luring the tiger from the mountains'.
 - Sought political as well as military outcomes.
 - All initiated by the VC/PAVN.
-
- **These were battles the enemy wanted.**
 - **Loss ratio is therefore irrelevant.**





'Big battles' and the 'contacts' compared

'The Contacts'

- Approximately 3890.
 - Small scale. Average 6 enemy or less.
 - Minimal warning. Not planned.
 - Short range, short duration.
 - Mostly infantry vs infantry. Little indirect fire support.
 - No political benefit to the VC/PAVN.
 - Overwhelmingly initiated by 1ATF.
-
- **These are battles the enemy did not want.**
 - **Loss ratio is a useful measure in these contacts.**



The 'big battles' and the 'contacts' compared collectively

	Big Battles	Contacts
Total number	About 16	3890 approx
Enemy strength	8180	20980
1ATF strength	4075	82700
Enemy casualties	1010	4480
1ATF casualties	287	1147





'The Contacts'

- Appear chaotic ...
- ... but fall into four main combat tasks:
 - Patrol contacts
 - Ambushes of the enemy
 - Bunker system attacks
 - 'Security' or 'defence of position' contacts
- ... each of which can be analysed further.



U.S. forces and 1ATF compared

Type of contact	Frequency	
	U.S. Army %	1ATF %
Ambush (by enemy)	23.3	2
Ambush (of enemy)	8.7	34
Attack on enemy position	17.9	8
Defence of position	30.4	20
'Hot' landing zone	12.5	insignificant
Patrol Encounter	7.1	36





‘Patrol Contacts’

- 1081
- 1ATF fires first in 78% of patrol contacts
 - When 1ATF fires first, loss ratio is 1:9
 - When VC/PAVN fires first, loss ratio is 1: 1.4



‘Ambush Contacts’

- 1ATF ambushes of the enemy = 1077 (about half at night)
- Enemy ambushes of 1ATF = 103
- 1ATF opens fire first in 96% of its ambushes.
- 1ATF suffers 1 casualty for every 10 inflicted.
- When the enemy ambushes 1ATF they suffer 1 casualty for every 2.5 inflicted.





‘Bunker System Contacts’

- Only 236 (or 6% of all 1ATF contacts)...
- ... but cause 45% of all 1ATF combat casualties.
- 1ATF opens fire first in 82% of bunker contacts.
- 1ATF loss ratio was 1:1.1...
- Enemy has advantage of prepared positions.
- Infantry firepower unable to overcome this advantage.



‘Security (or Defence of Position) Contacts’

- Approximately 800.
- Mainly probes of positions at night.
- 1ATF fires first in 64%
- 1ATF lost 1 casualty for every 2.75 enemy casualties.



'The Contacts'

- 1ATF dominates in all 4 contact types.
- Why?
 - Superior bushcraft
 - Superior shooting skills
 - Not reliant on tracks
 - Usually achieves local numerical superiority



‘The aim of guerrilla warfare is not to wage large-scale battles and win big victories, but to nibble at the enemy, harass him in such a way that he can neither eat nor sleep in peace, to give him no respite, to wear him out physically and mentally, and finally to annihilate him. Wherever he goes, he should be attacked by our guerrillas, stumble on land mines or be greeted by sniper fire.’

Ho Chi Minh

Questions?



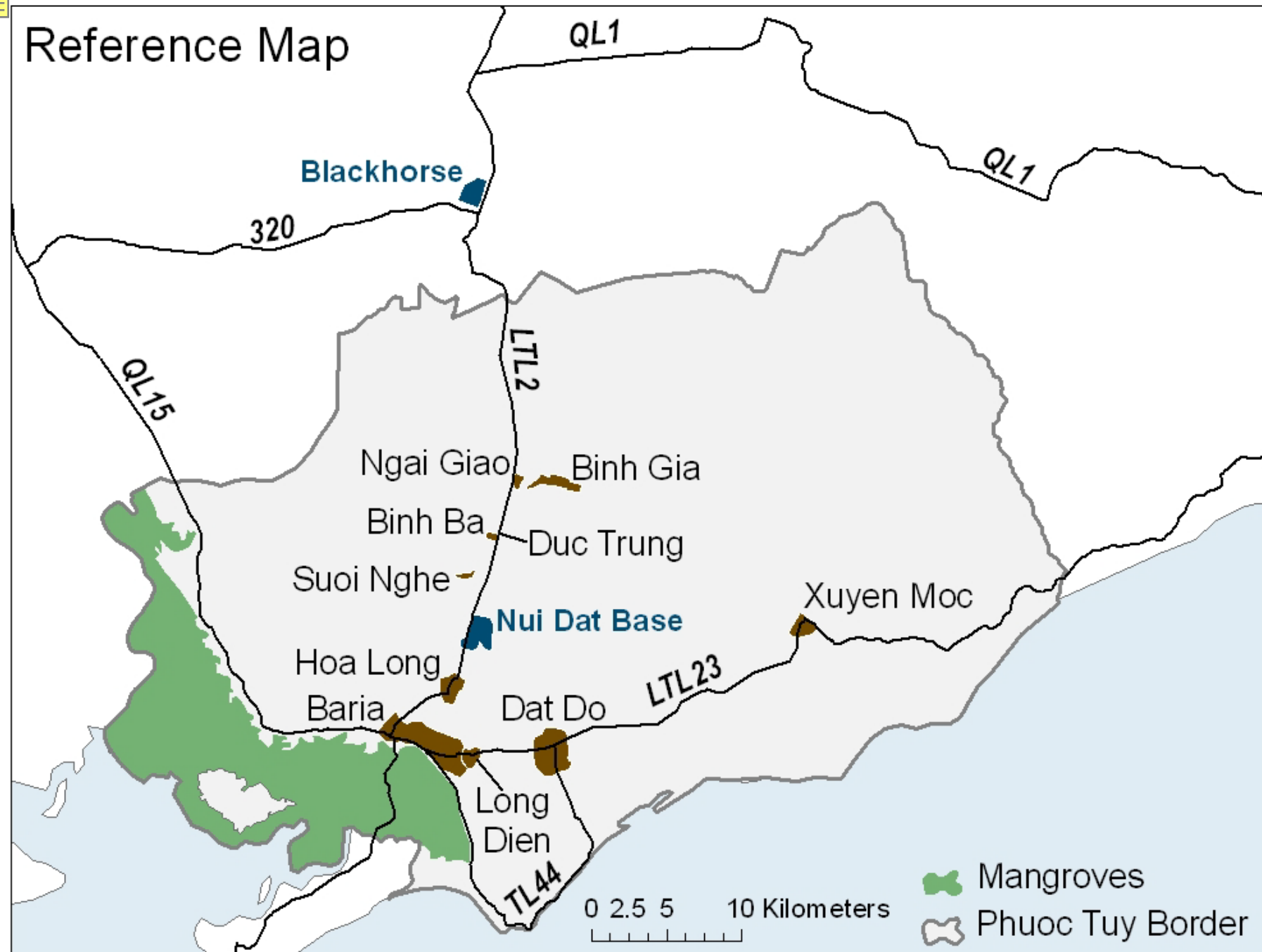
Separating the enemy from the people

Bunker system attacks

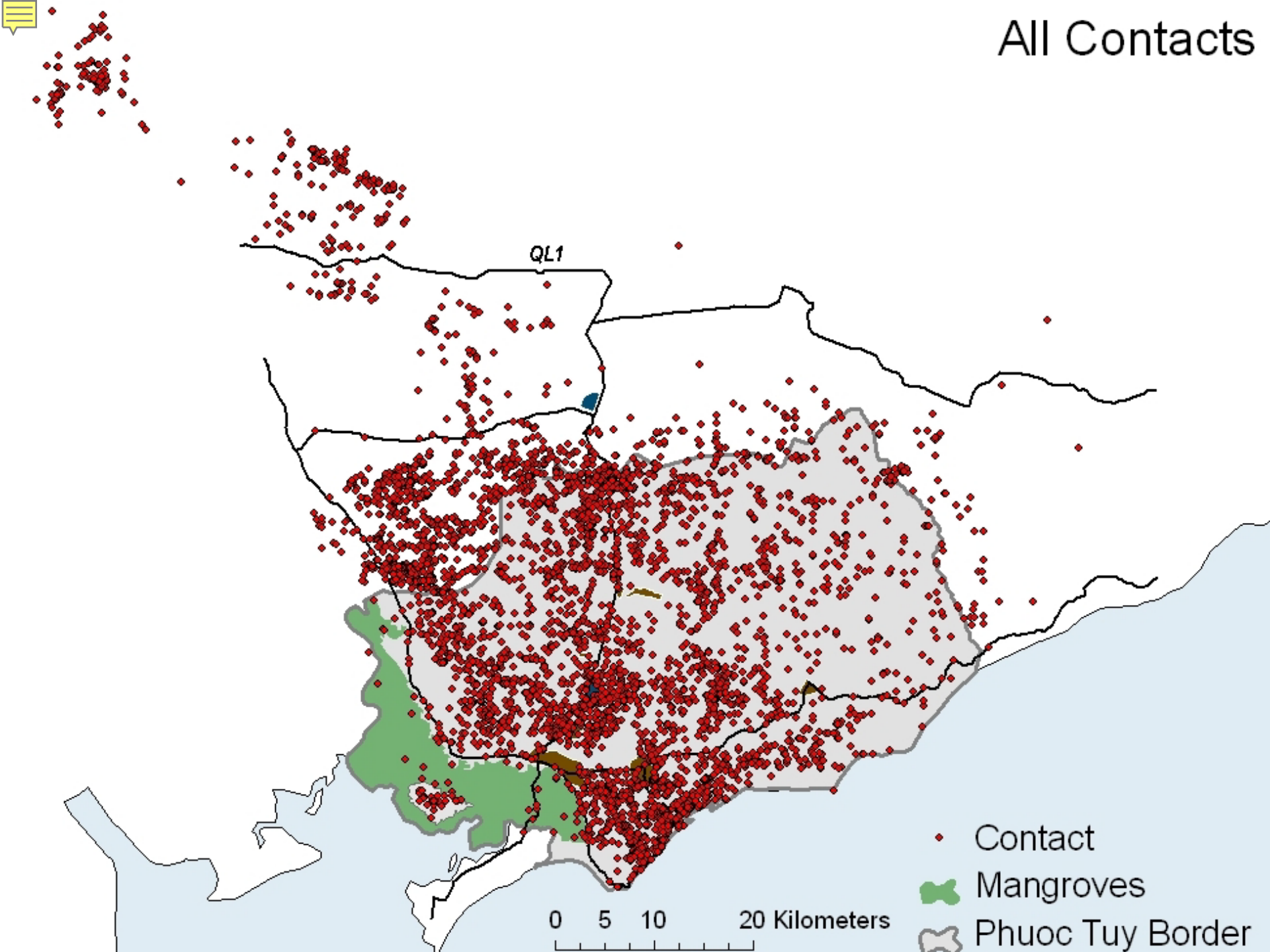
Ambushing around villages

Patrol encounters

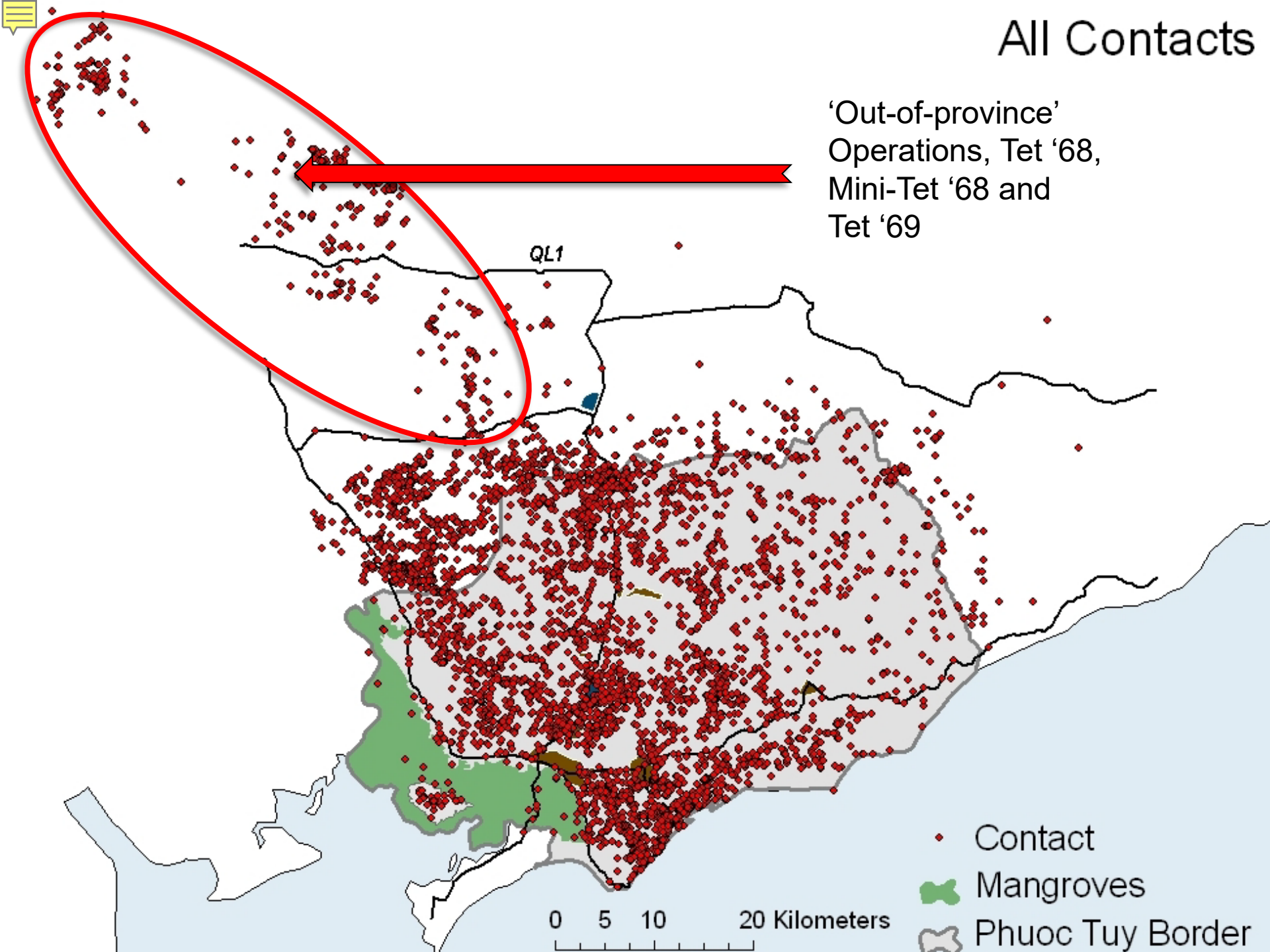
Reference Map



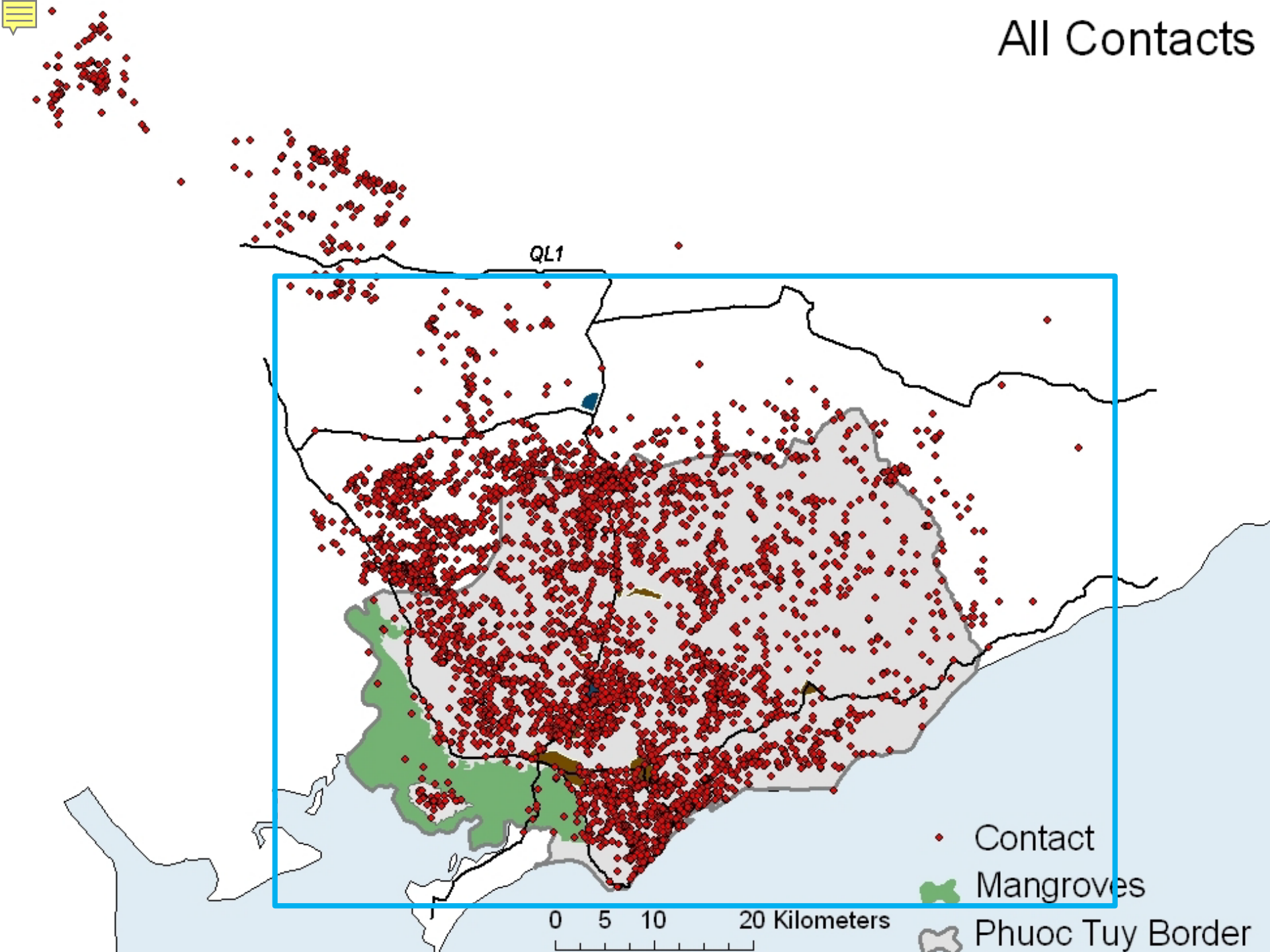
All Contacts

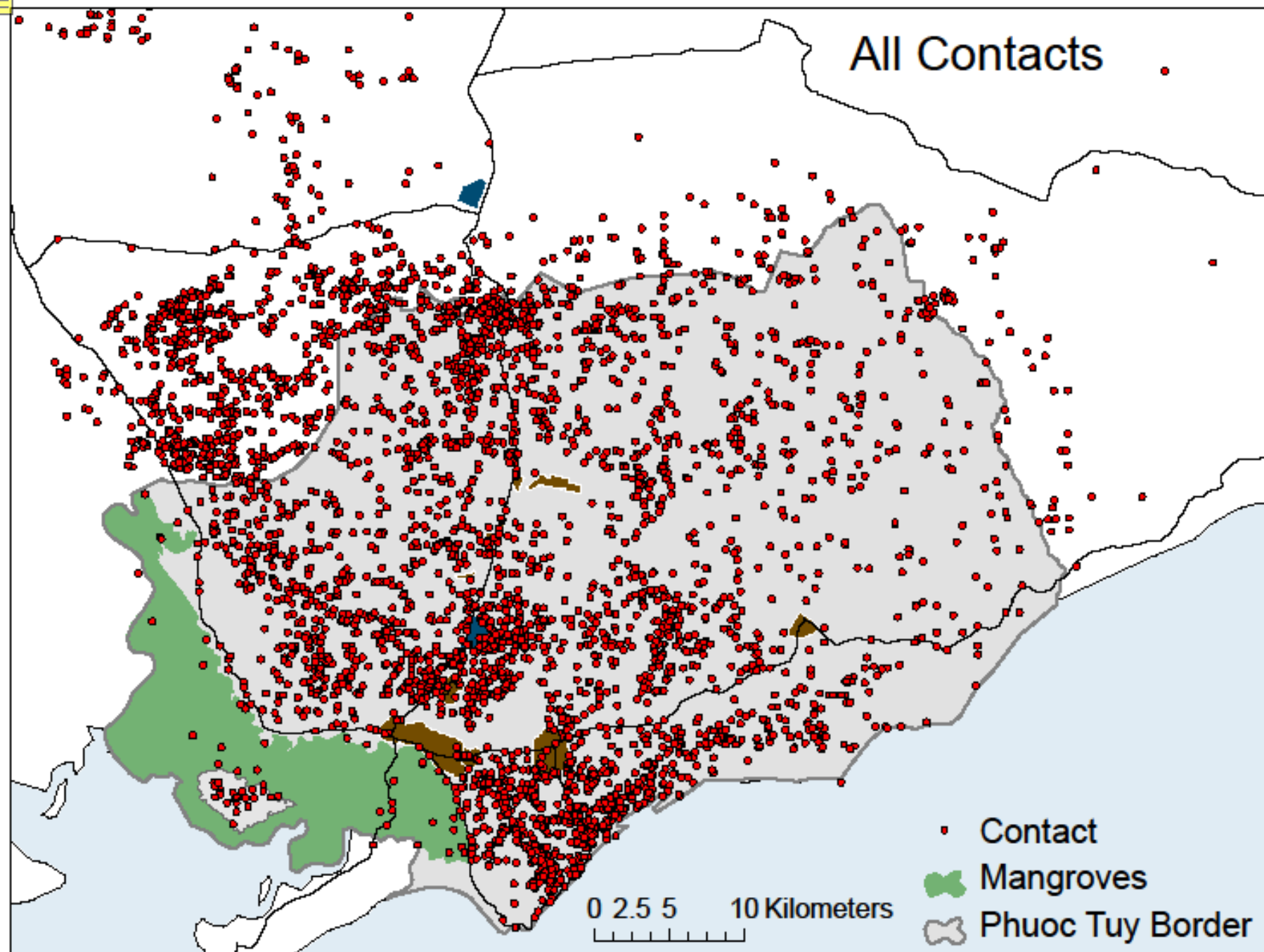


All Contacts

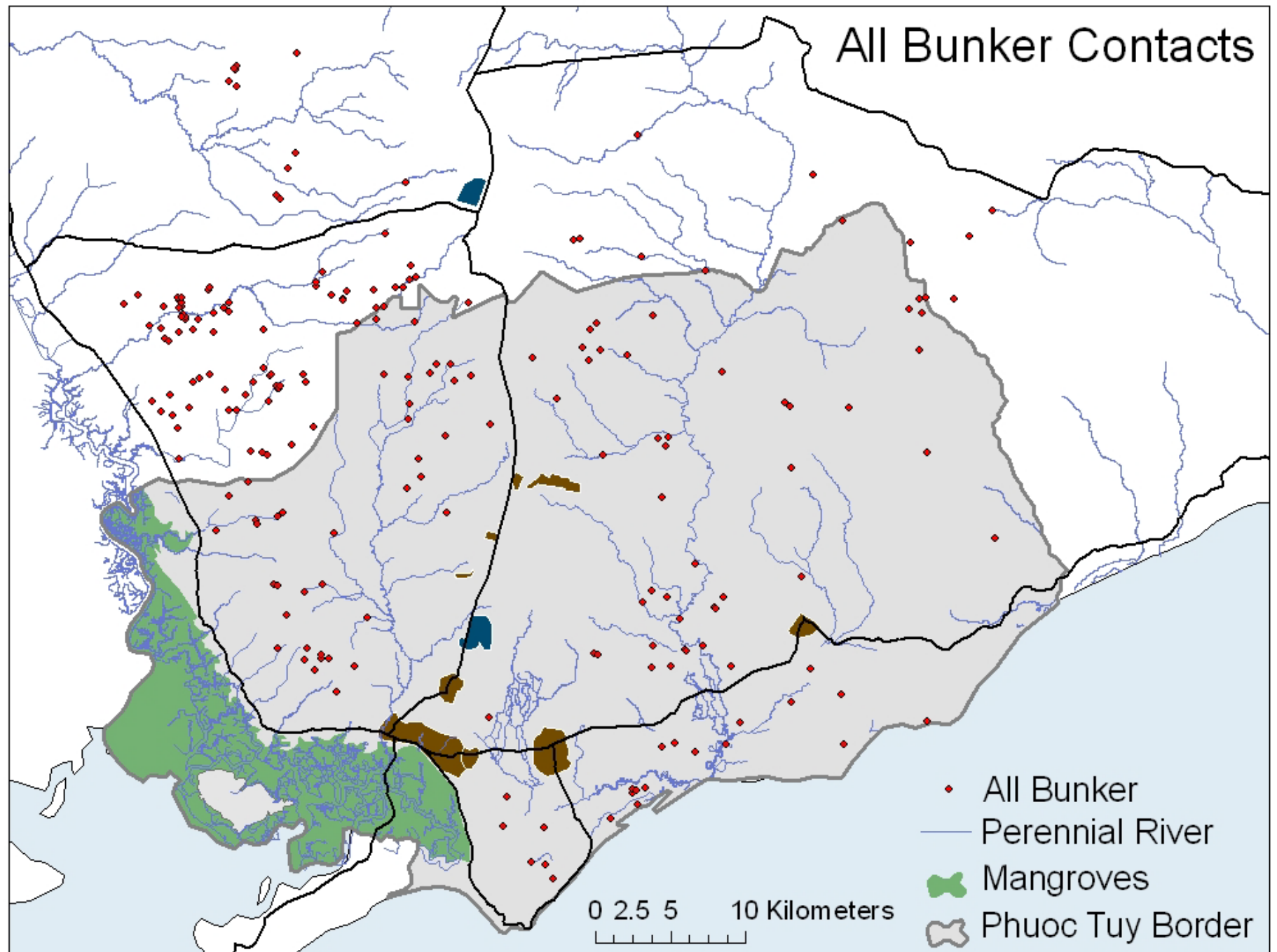


All Contacts

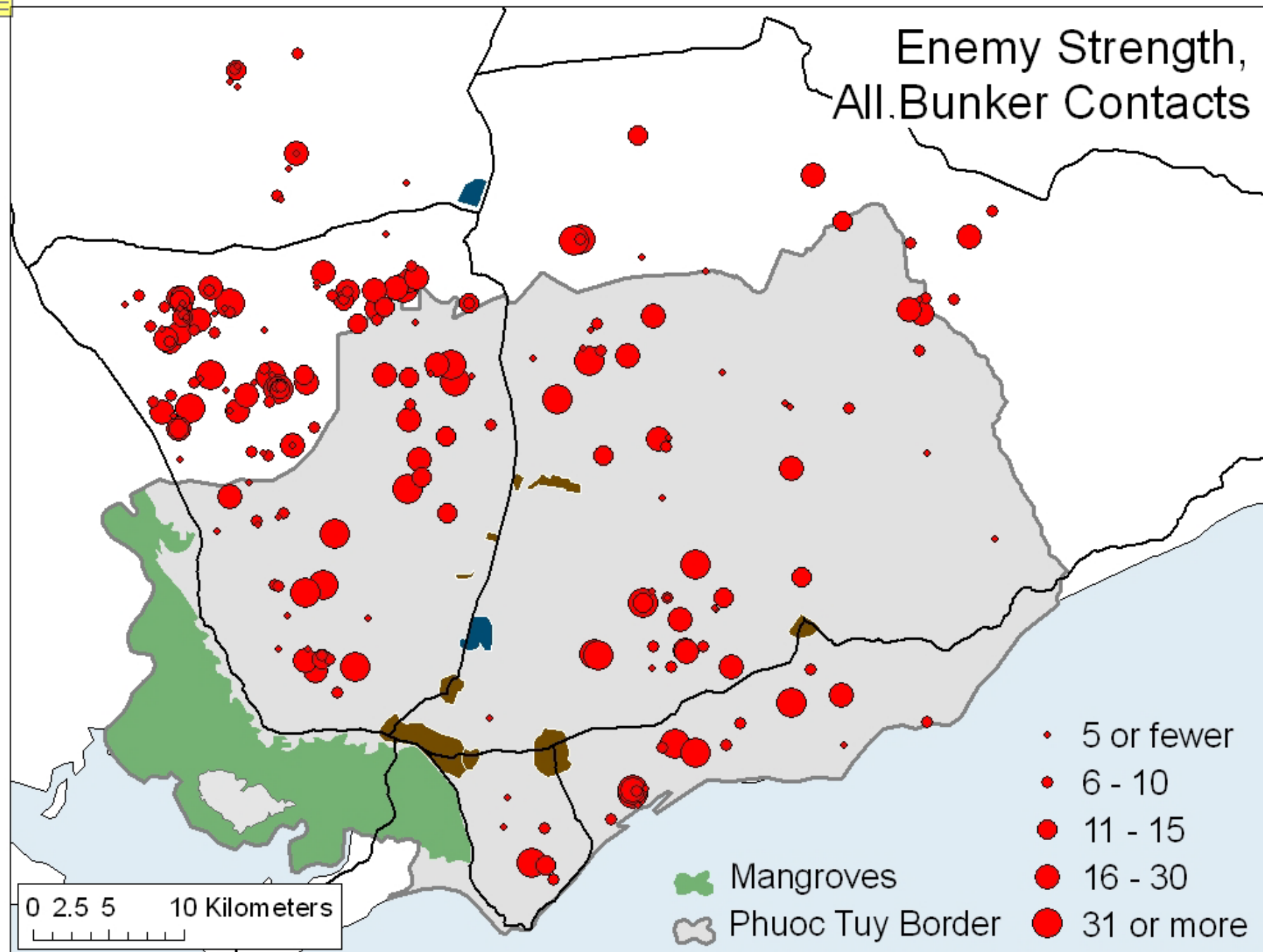




All Bunker Contacts



Enemy Strength, All Bunker Contacts



Bunker systems and food captured by 1ATF

	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
Bunker systems Captured	91	299	283	455	402	275
Average weight of food captured (lbs)	4414	2193	624	157	103	80

The VC turn to alternative sources of food

	1969	1970	1971
VC food scrounging incidents	6	91	247
VC tax collection incidents	1	88	249

1ATF patrol and ambush contacts within 2.5km of a village

	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
Patrol and ambush contacts	93	60	123	113	132	46



The shifting tide:

Enemy incidents	1970	1971
Food collection	89	241
Tax collection	87	245
Intelligence gathering	149	265

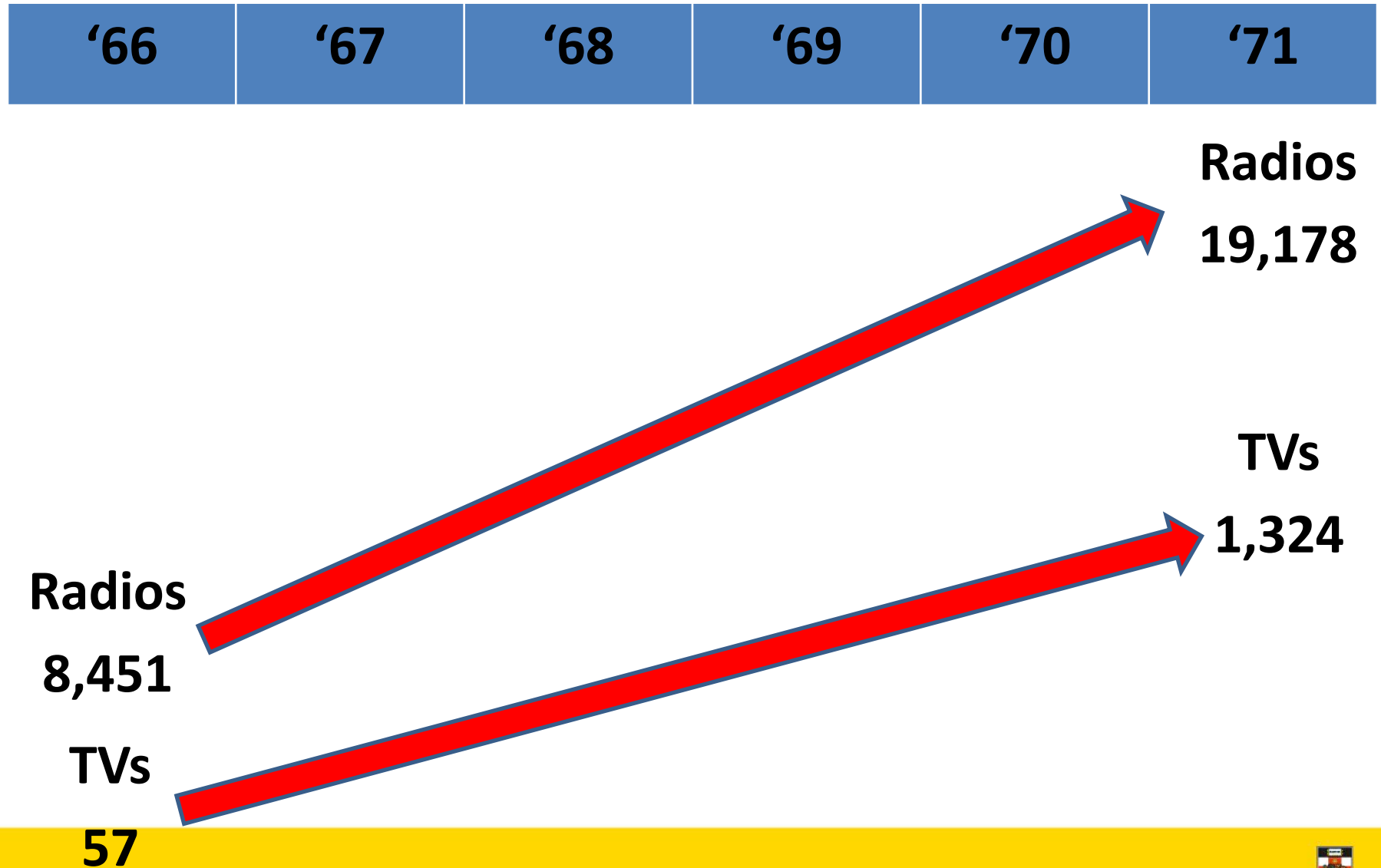


The intersection of
combat operations,
social development,
economics...
...and politics

?



The shifting tide: Radios and Televisions





The shifting tide: Other factors

UP

- Population
- School attendance
- Hospital beds
- Motor vehicles (dramatically)
- Number of farm tractors
- Number of powered fishing boats
- Tonnes and value of farm produce (pigs, chickens)
- Tonnes and value of seafood
- Hectares under 'miracle' rice (from 1967)

Phuoc Tuy was becoming prosperous





Questions?

Never Stand Still

Australian Centre for the Study of Armed Conflict and Society

Contact:

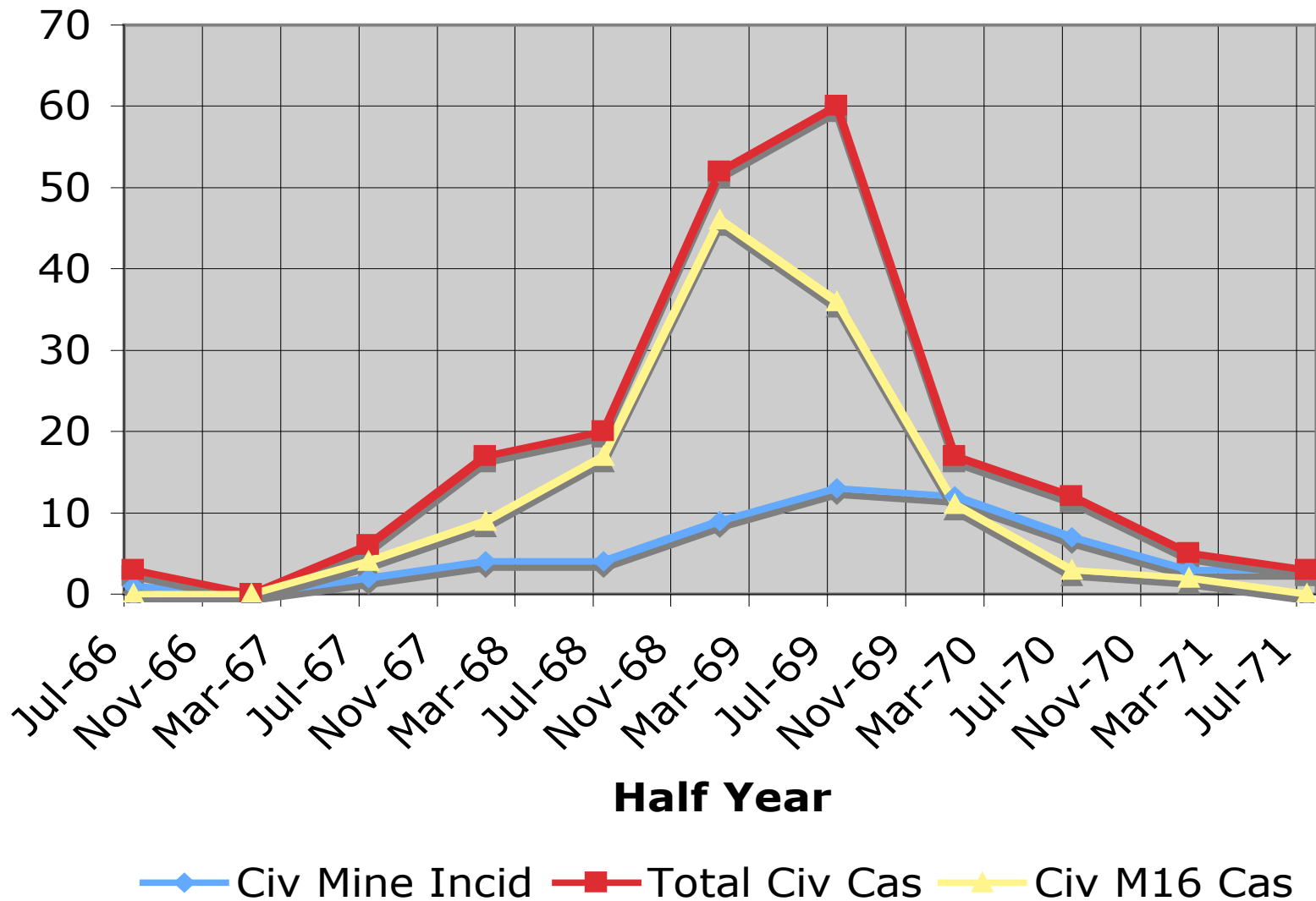
Dr Bob Hall

Phone: 62688848

Mobile: 0439 887580

Email: b.hall@adfa.edu.au

**Figure 10: Civilian Casualties from VC Mines
in Phuoc Tuy July 1966 to Dec 1971**





Questions?

Never Stand Still

Australian Centre for the Study of Armed Conflict and Society

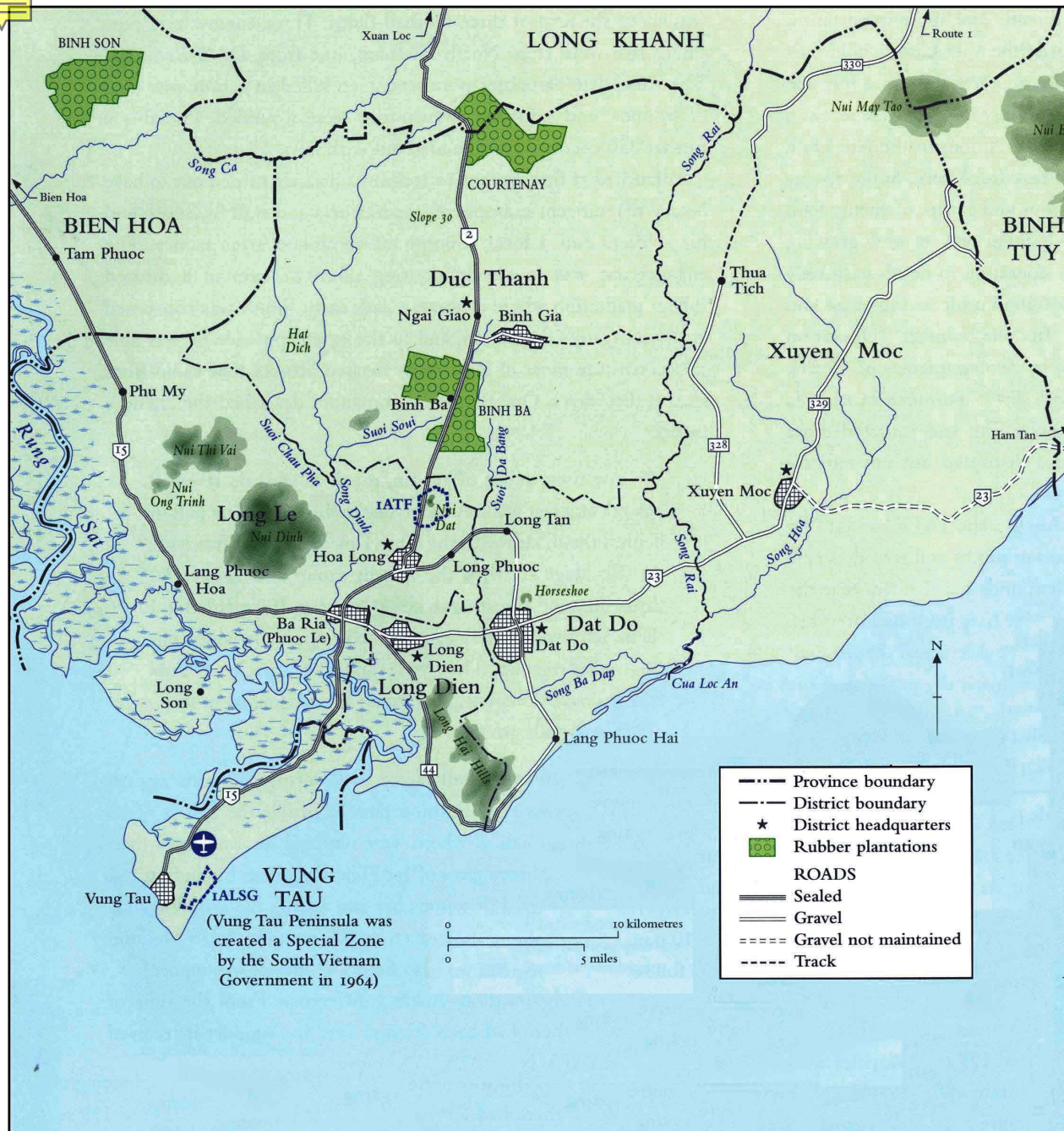
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Who was initiating contacts?

Year	Enemy	1 ATF	ARVN	Prov. Force	US	Total Contacts
1968	368	472	36	108	21	1005
1969	380	810	60	173	10	1433
1970	223	588	8	200	114	1133
1971	135	259	6	193	66	659
Total	1106	2129	110	674	211	4230



Shots per casualty analysis for 1ATF:

	Combat task			
Weapon	Patrol encounter	Ambush (of enemy)	Bunker system attack	Security or defence of position
7.62mm GPMG M60	619	495	1310	761
5.56mm M16	232	319	679	307
7.62mm SLR	187	222	517	174

Shots per casualty – various battalions:

	Time in theatre		
	1 st 3 months	Middle 6 months	Last 3 months
Battalion tours (all 2nd tours except 3RAR)			
7RAR (Feb 70 - Feb 71)	596	411	203
8RAR (Nov 69 - Nov 70)	668	547	176
2RAR/NZ (May 70 - May 71)	1371	486	364
3RAR (Dec 67 - Nov 68)	471	284	253
5RAR (Feb 69 - Feb 70)	305	490	646
6RAR/NZ (May 69 – May 70)	289	344	1305



First to fire according to combat task:

	Combat task			
First to fire	Patrol encounter	Ambush (of enemy)	Bunker system attack	Security or defence of position
1ATF	618 (78%)	772 (96%)	394 (82%)	121 (64%)
VC/PAVN	176 (22%)	34 (4%)	88 (18%)	68 (36%)
Total	794	806	482	189

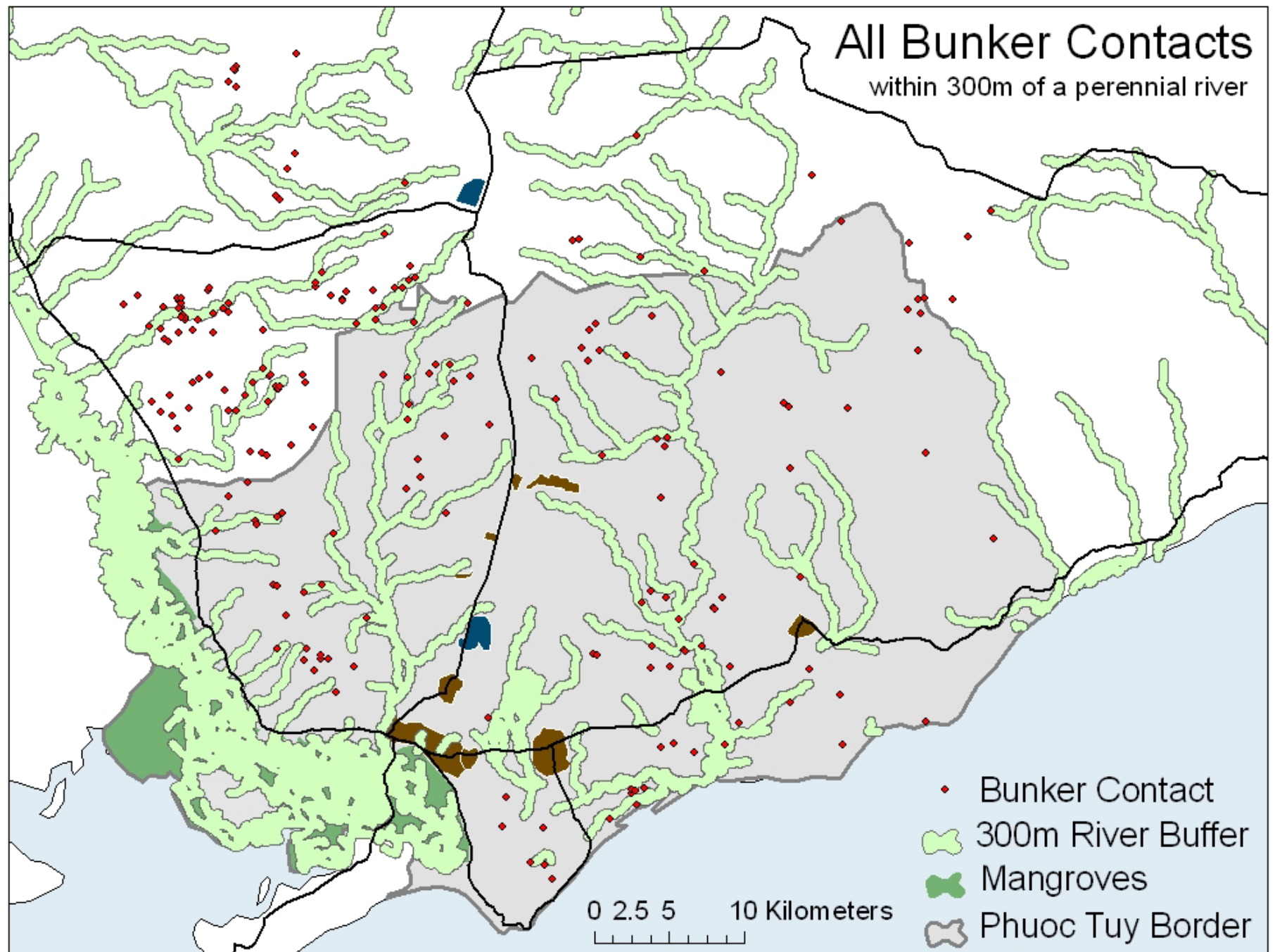


First to fire and Loss Ratio:

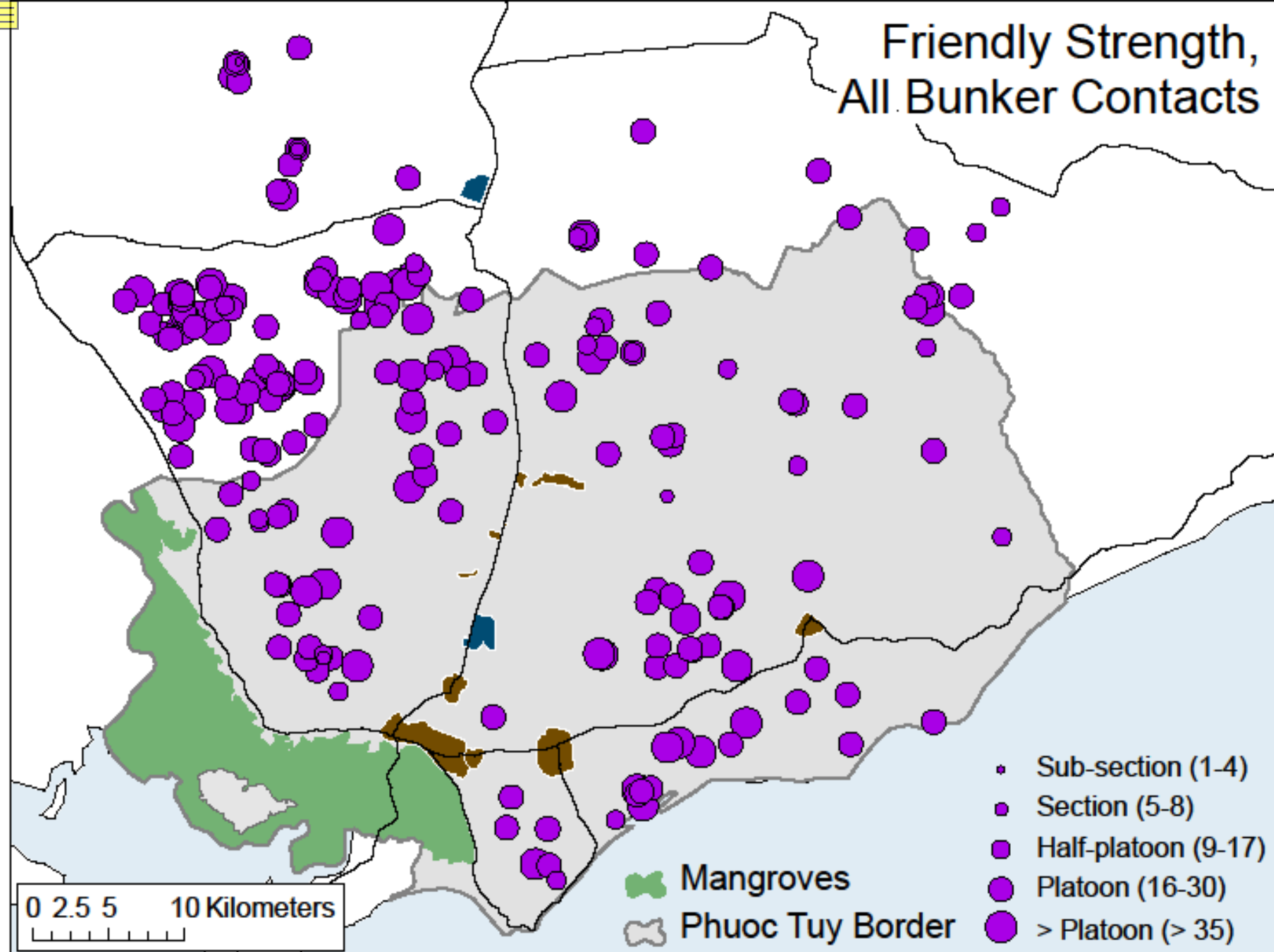
First to fire	% of first shot gained	Loss Ratio (en cas/friendly cas)	Shots per enemy cas (average)
1ATF	89.5	5.7:1	348
VC/PAVN	10.5	0.7:1	890

All Bunker Contacts

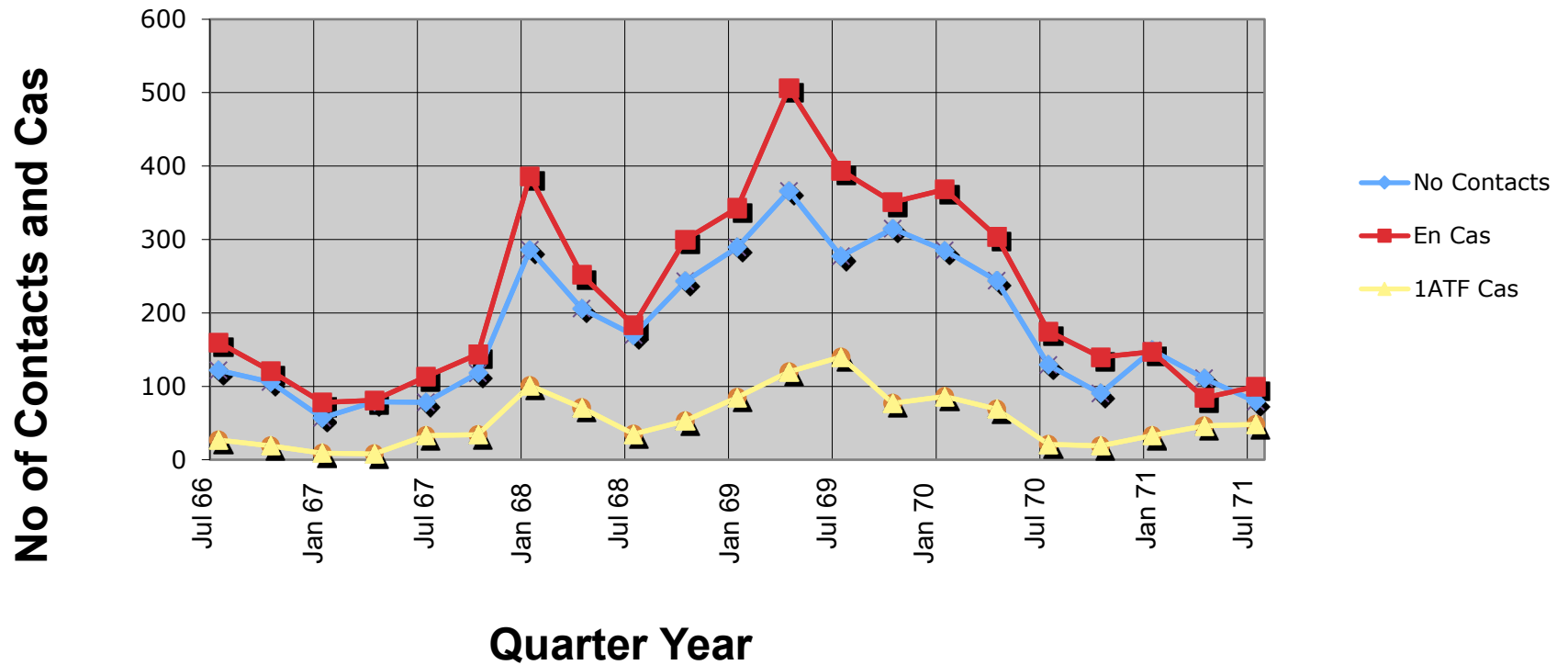
within 300m of a perennial river



Friendly Strength, All Bunker Contacts



1ATF Contacts and Associated Casualties





- Shots per casualty analysis for 1ATF
- First to fire according to combat task

For the US forces:

- 50,000 to 200,000 shots per enemy casualty
- The enemy fires first in over 80% of contacts

What were the figures for 1ATF?

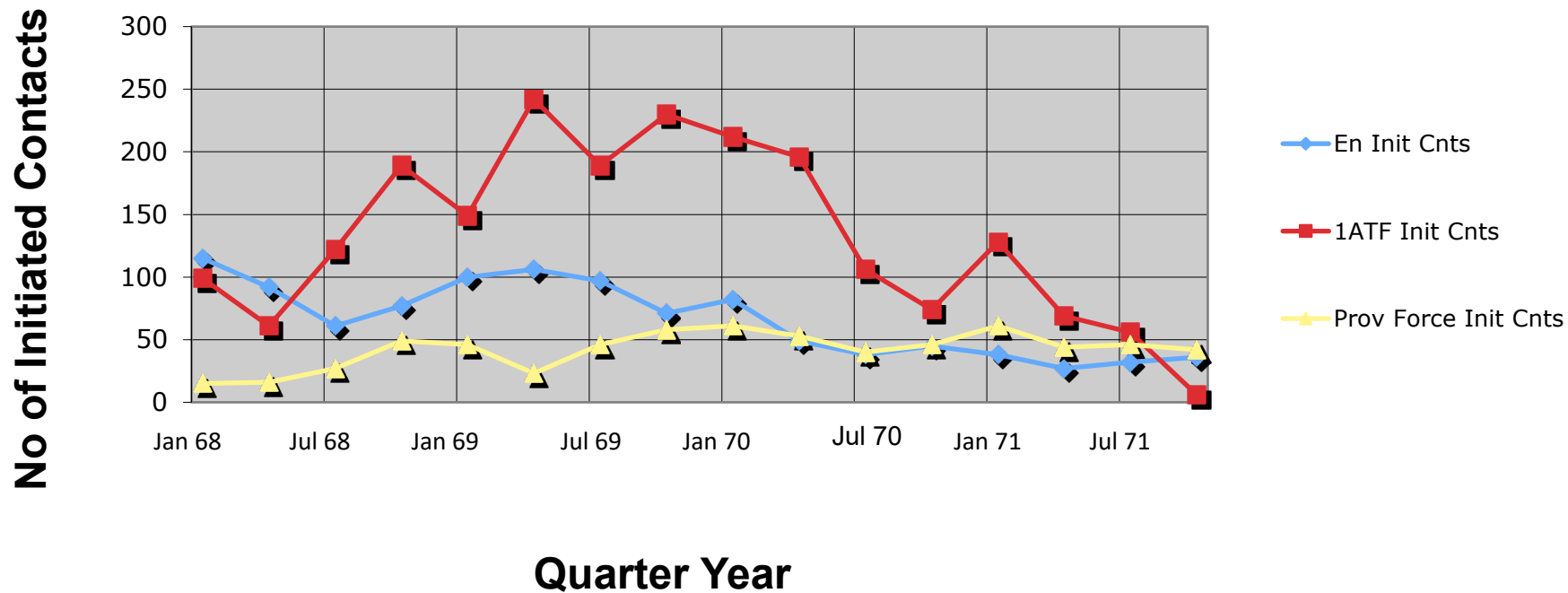


The struggle for the people

‘What matters the most is that our armed forces ... must hold fast to the people; divorce from the latter will surely lead to defeat. To cling to the people means to win their hearts, gain their confidence and affection. This will allow us to overcome any difficulty and achieve sure success. To this end we must protect, assist and educate the people.’

Ho Chi Minh

Enemy, 1ATF, and Province Force Initiated Contacts in Phuoc Tuy and its Border Regions





UNSW
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
CANBERRA

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