

A new operational analysis: 1st Australian Task Force Vietnam, 1966-1971

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The Vietnam Combat Database

ENCLOSURE 4 TO 8 RAR COMBAT OPS AFTER ACTION REPORT

Example of an original contact report

CONFIDENTIAL

CONTACT AFTER ACTION REPORT OF KEPERRA

Part 1

Report by No 38520 Sgt D.H.JUCKEL, 8 RAR, A Coy, 3 Pl.
Date/Time of contact was 271547H, at grid location of YS345637
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 recce-in-force of the western side of the re-entrant at the above grid reference. We discovered bunkersigns and shook out in extended line from the top of the ridge to the creek. The enemy initiated the contact with 2-3 eleymores and 1 RPG. followed by long bursts of 2-5 AK47s. The section 2IC was only 1 ur 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.

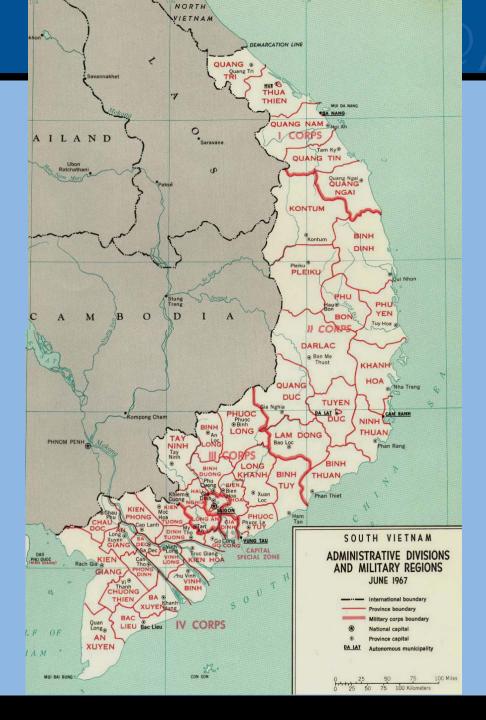
6. Who was the first to see the enemy (names not required; insert fwd scout, MG No 1, etc as applicable.) - The fwd scout.

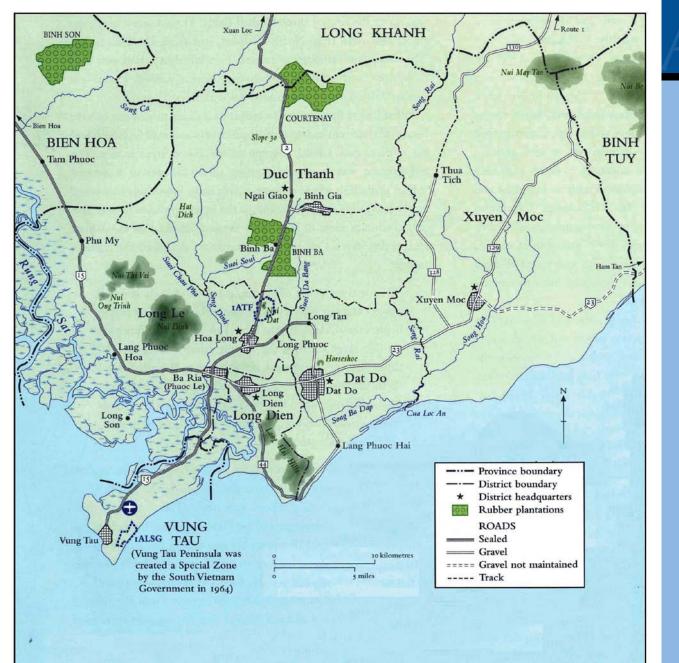
7. Distance to the enemy when first sighted was 20 metres.

Example of a database record

Fr Units Involved B pl C Coy 3 RAR En Type BF SPACE AND TIME Location of Incident Name Date [13/3/1968] Grid Ref YS487528 Grid Ref I YS487628	Fr Units Involved 8 DIC Cov 3 BAB	
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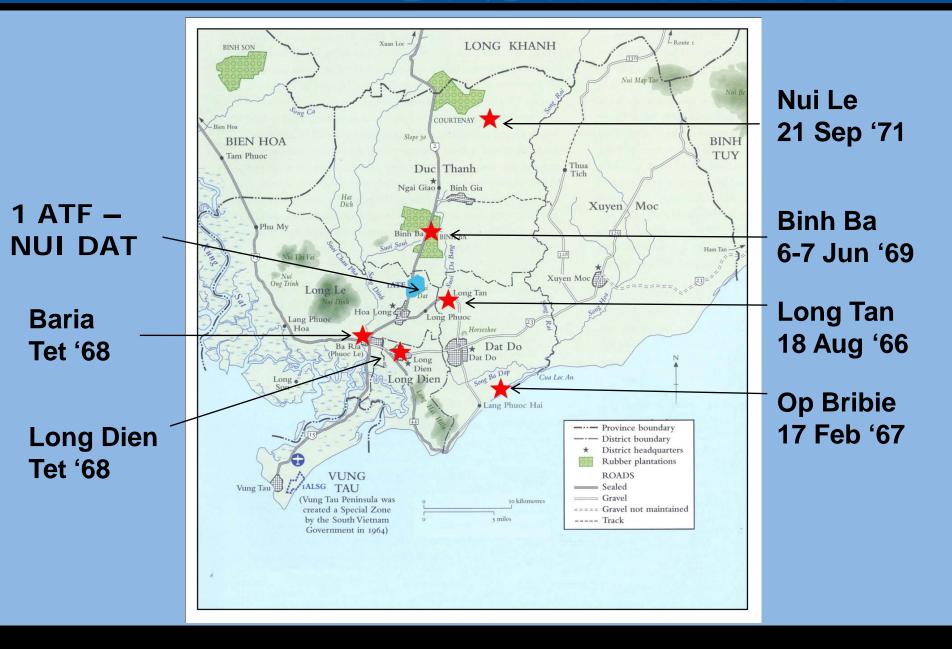


The 'big battles' (or 'landmark' battles)

- Battle of Long Tan: 18 Aug 66
- Operation Bribie: 17 Feb 67
- Battles of Tet '68: Baria, Long Dien
- Battles of FSB Coral
- Battles of FSB Balmoral
- Battle of Binh Ba: 6-7 June 69
- Battle of Nui Le: 21 Sep 71

Characteristics of the 'big battles'

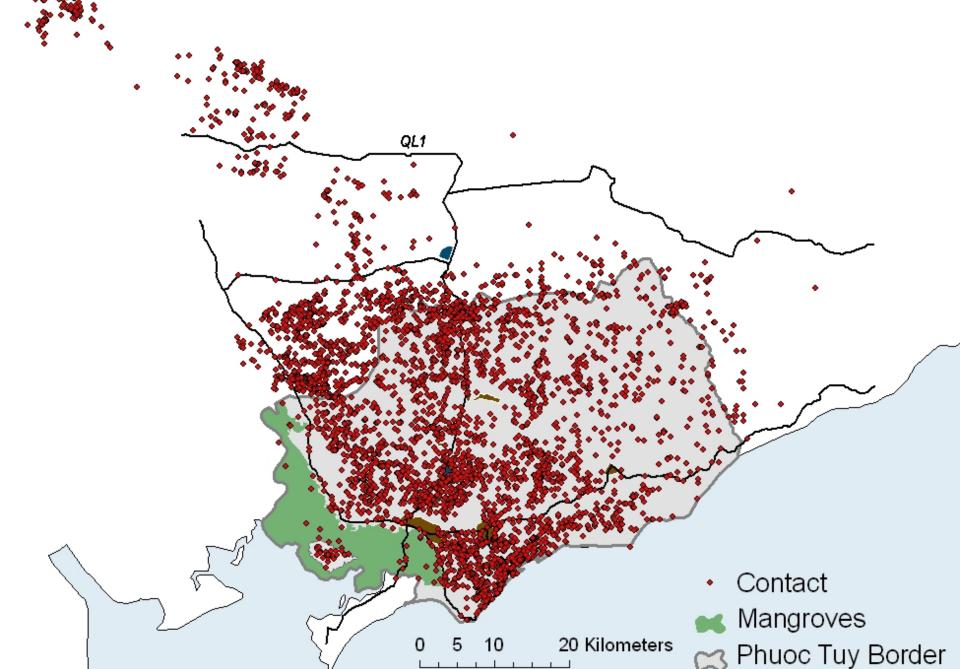
- •All are initiated by the People's Army
- Light infantry versus 'Combined Arms Team'
- Large People's Army casualties
- Strong tendency to 'stay and fight'
- Few in number
- Strong tendency towards 'luring the tiger from the jungle'
- Planned over a long period
- Strong tendency towards achieving surprise
- All seek a political as well as military result

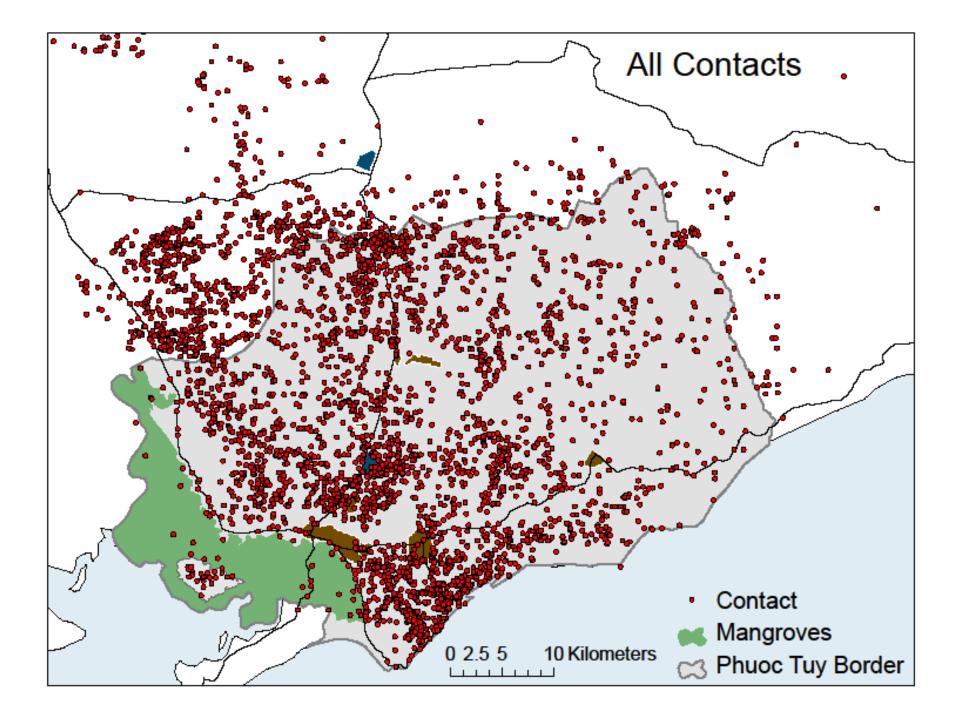


Characteristics of the 'little battles' (contacts)

- Overwhelmingly initiated by 1ATF
- Short range and short duration
- Overwhelmingly light infantry against light infantry
- Small numbers of troops involved
- Overwhelmingly the PAVN prefer to avoid these battles and they seek to break contact
- Two-thirds are ambushes or patrol encounters
- Either neutral or negative political value to the enemy
- Very large numbers of contacts (approx 3900)

All Contacts

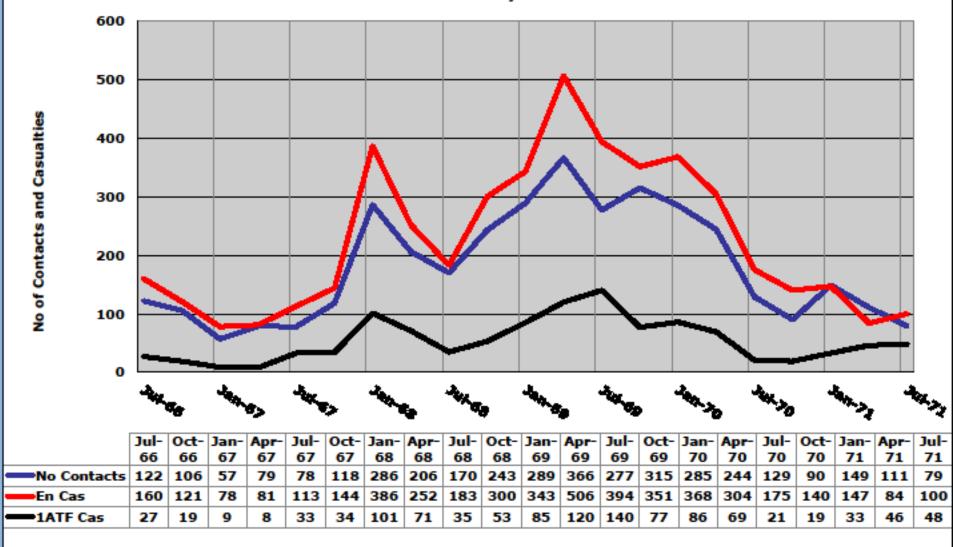




U.S. forces and 1ATF compared

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		

1ATF Contacts and Associated Casualties (minus General and Urban Engagements and Mine Incidents) 1966-1971

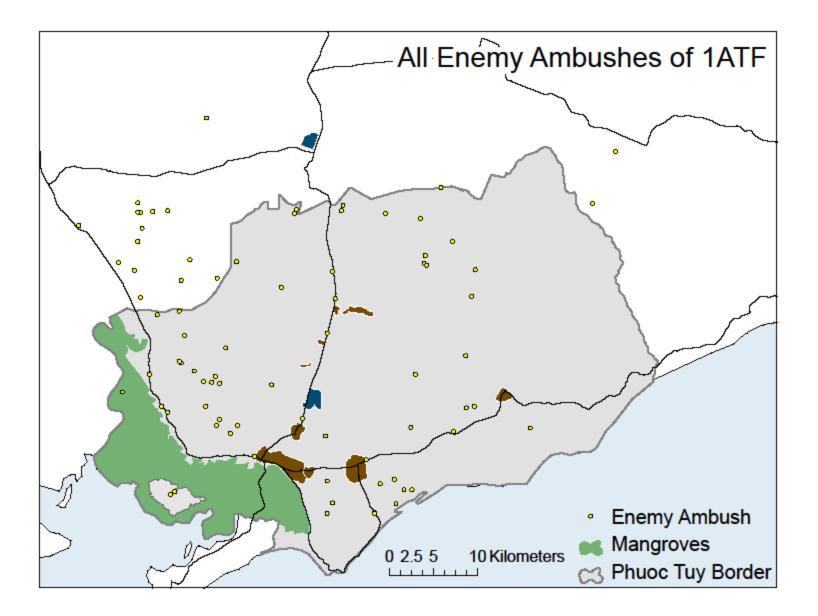


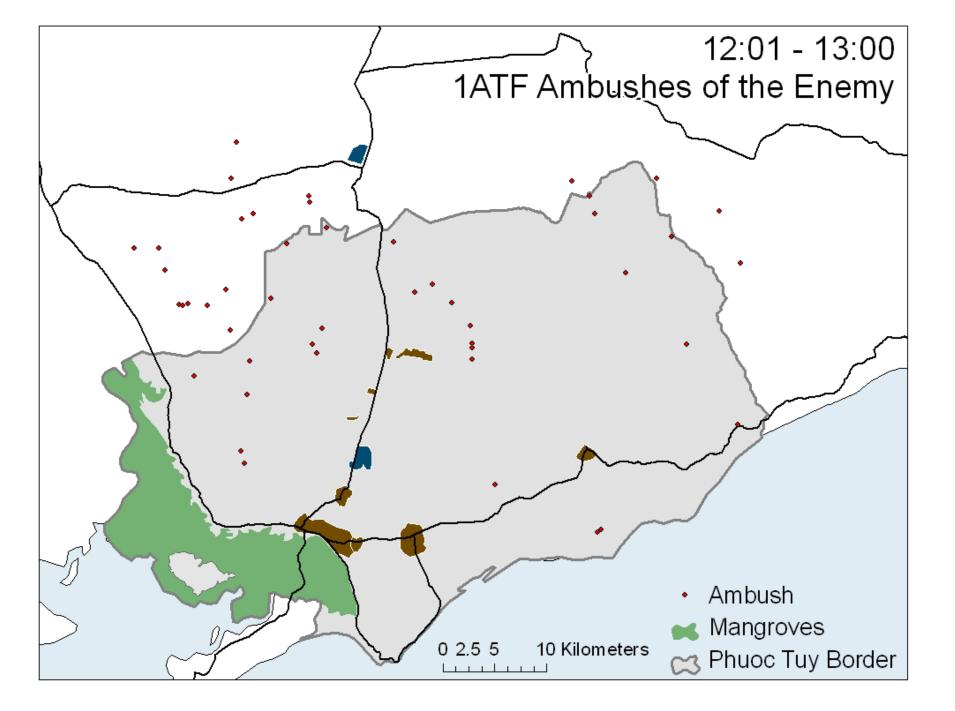
1ATF average shots per casualty by combat task and weapon type

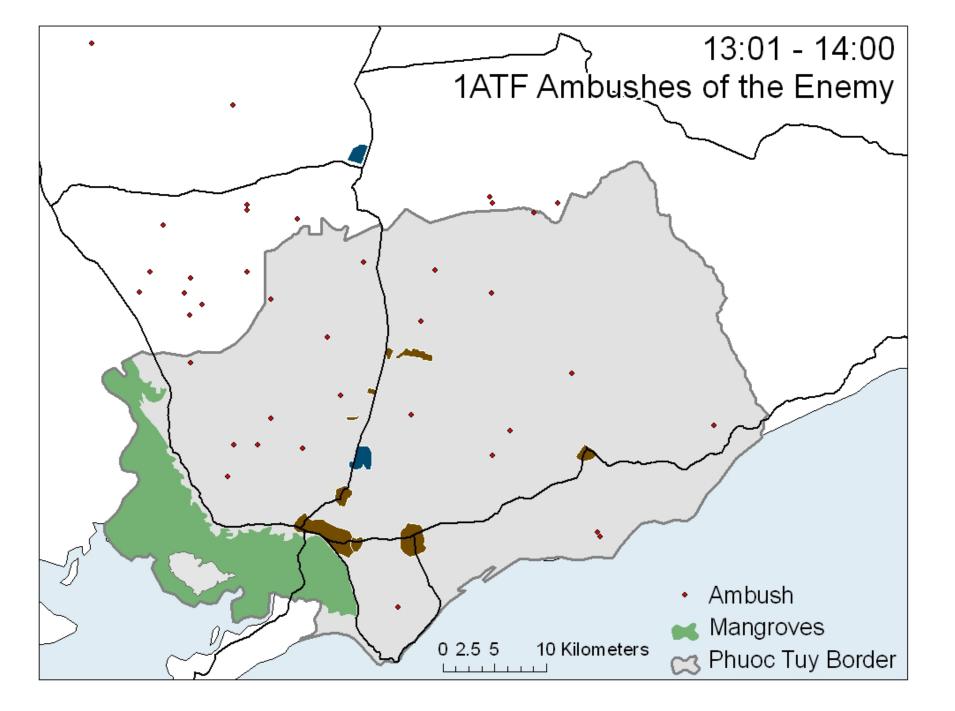
Weapon type	Combat task				
	Patrol encounter	Ambush (of enemy)	Bunker system attack	Security or defence of position	
7.62mm GPMG M60	619	495	1310	761	
5.56mm M16	232	319	679	307	
7.62mm SLR	187	222	517	174	

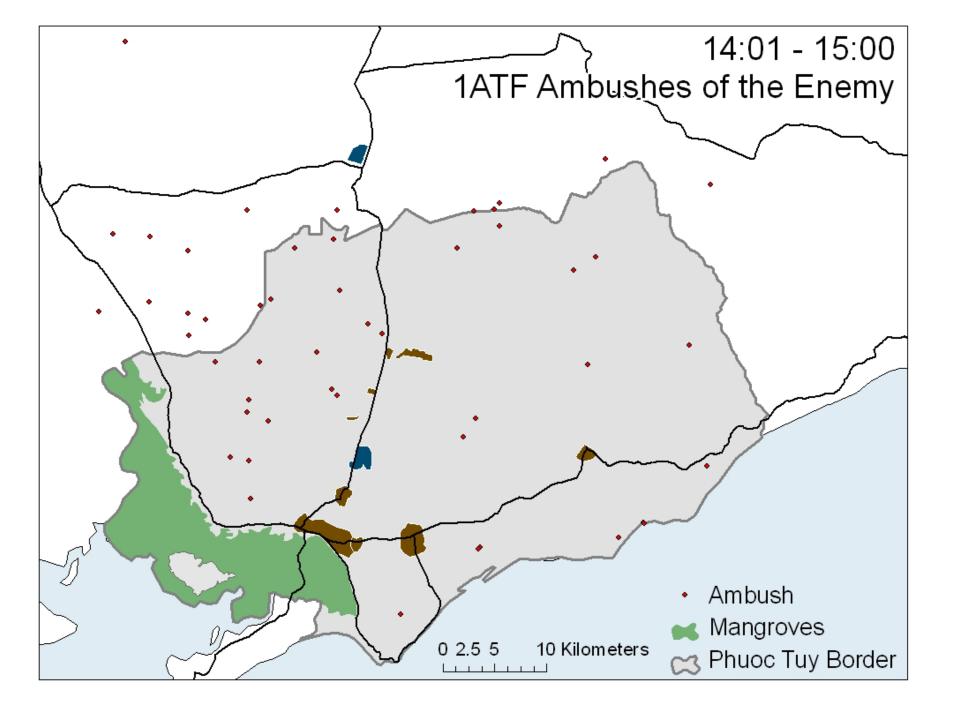
Ambushes

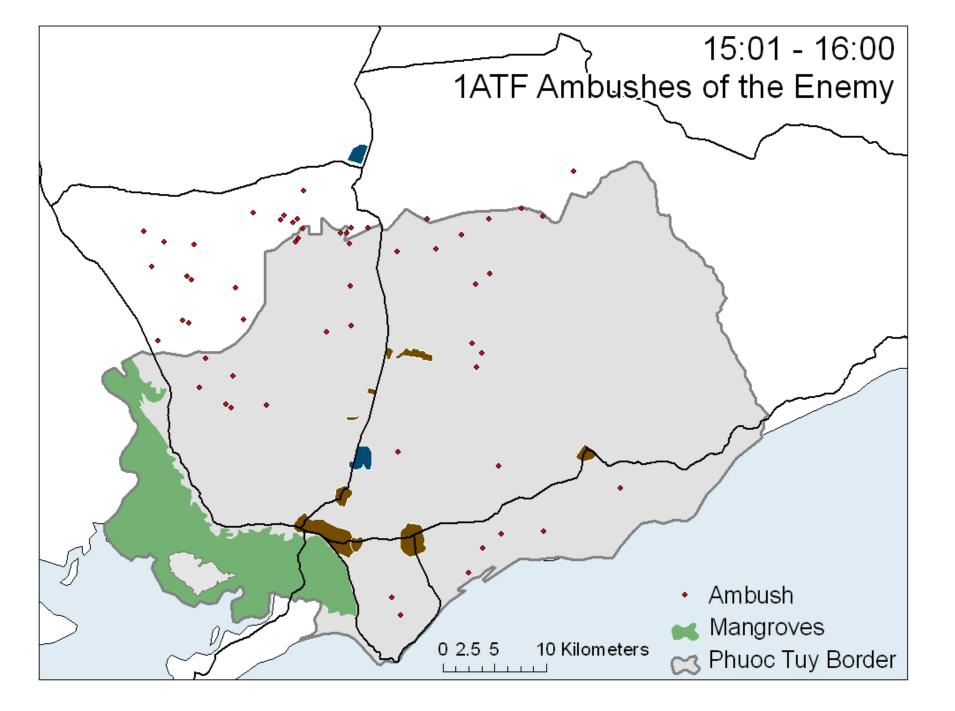
- 2% of 1ATF contacts were enemy ambushes of 1ATF
- 34% were 1ATF ambushes of the enemy
- 79% of 1ATF ambushes were against 6 enemy or less
- 50% were at 10 m range or less
- 1ATF infantry loss ratio = 1:10
- Enemy loss ration = 1:2.7

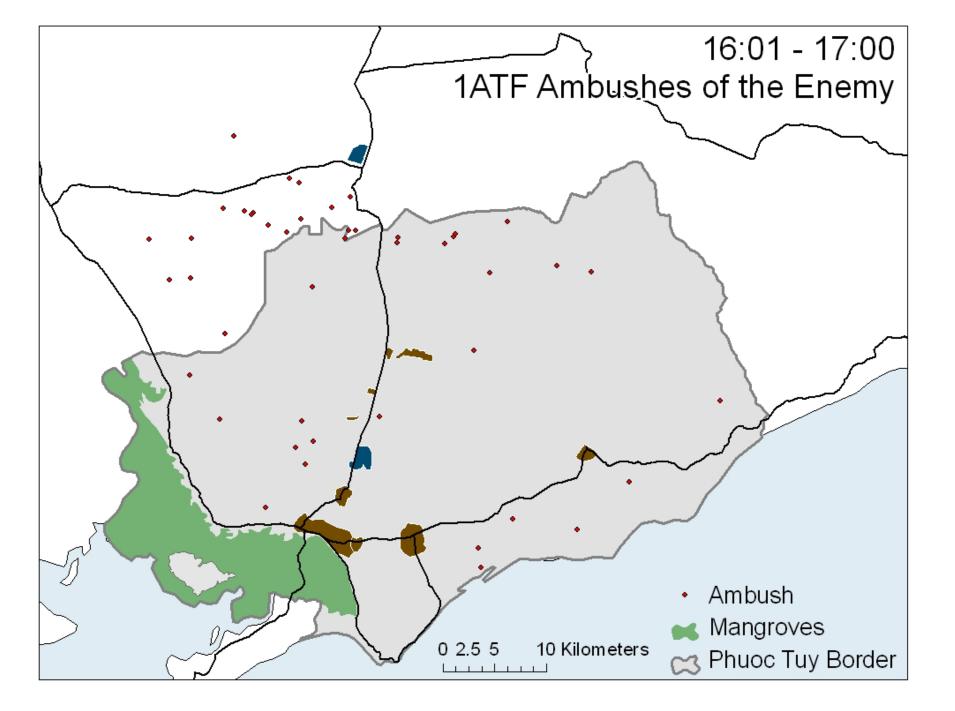


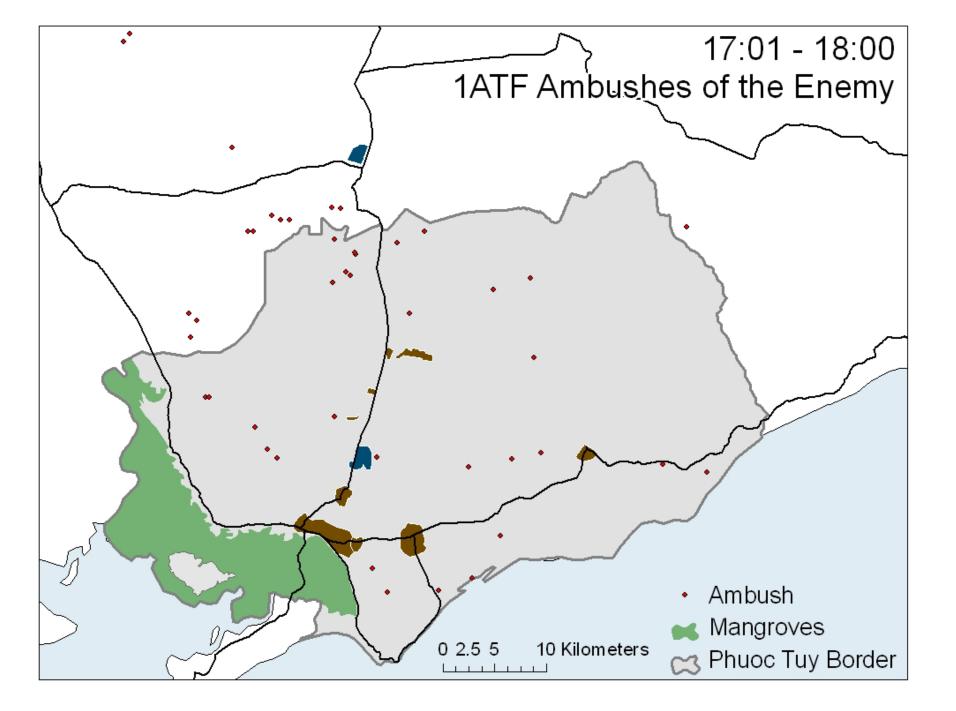


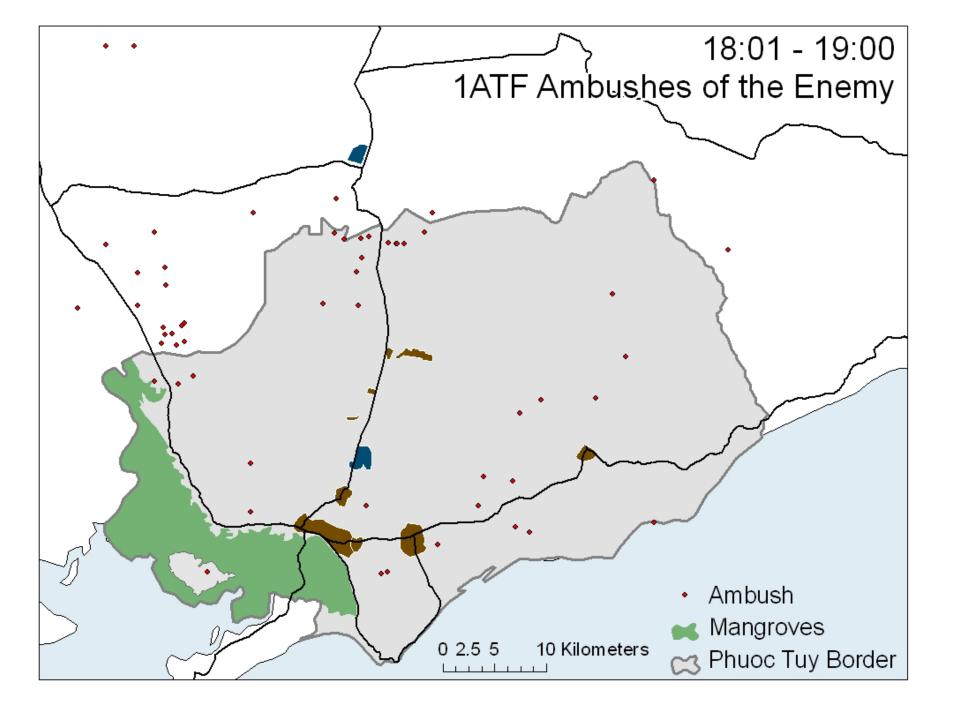


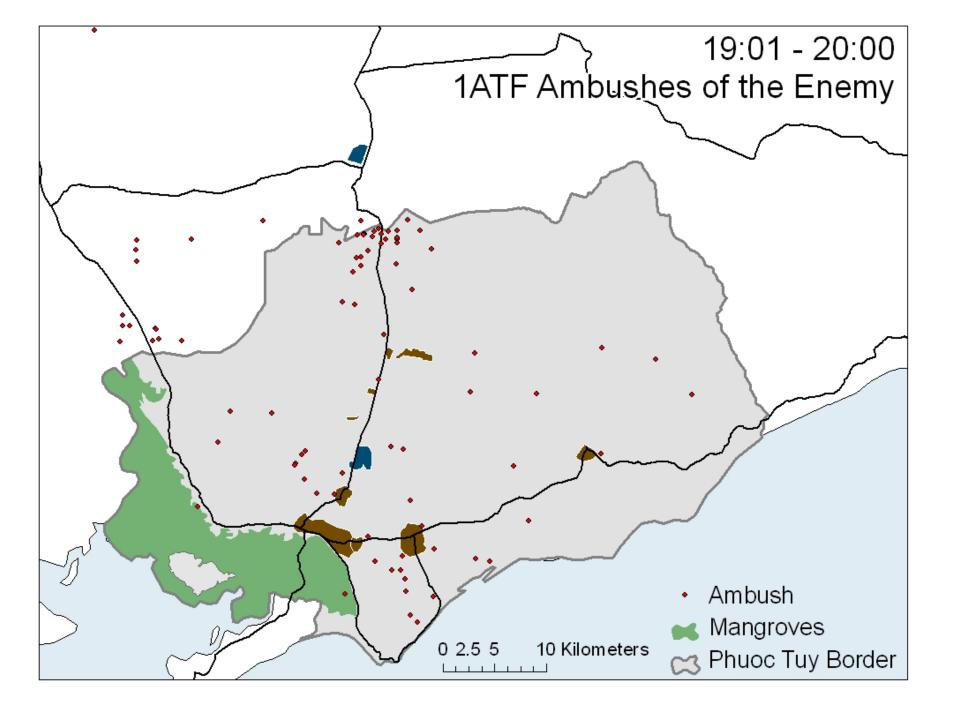


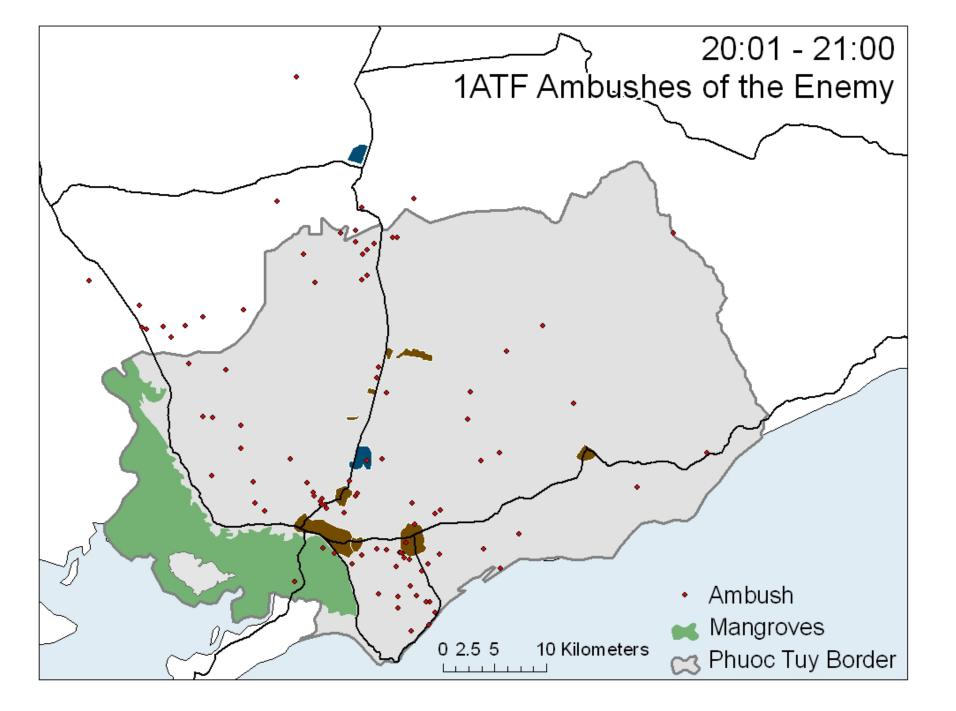


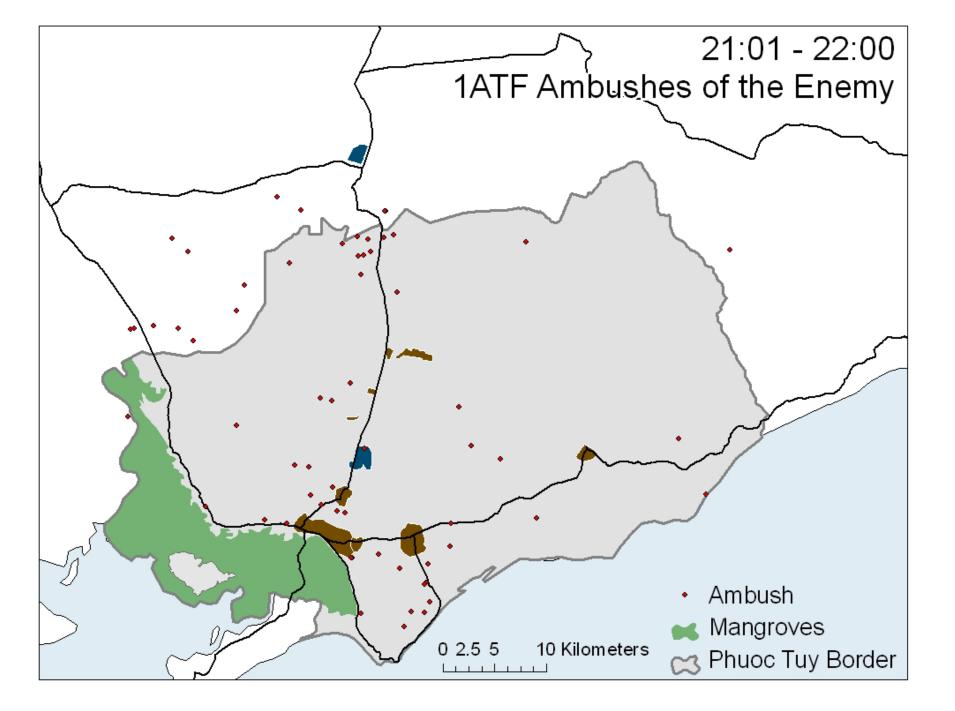


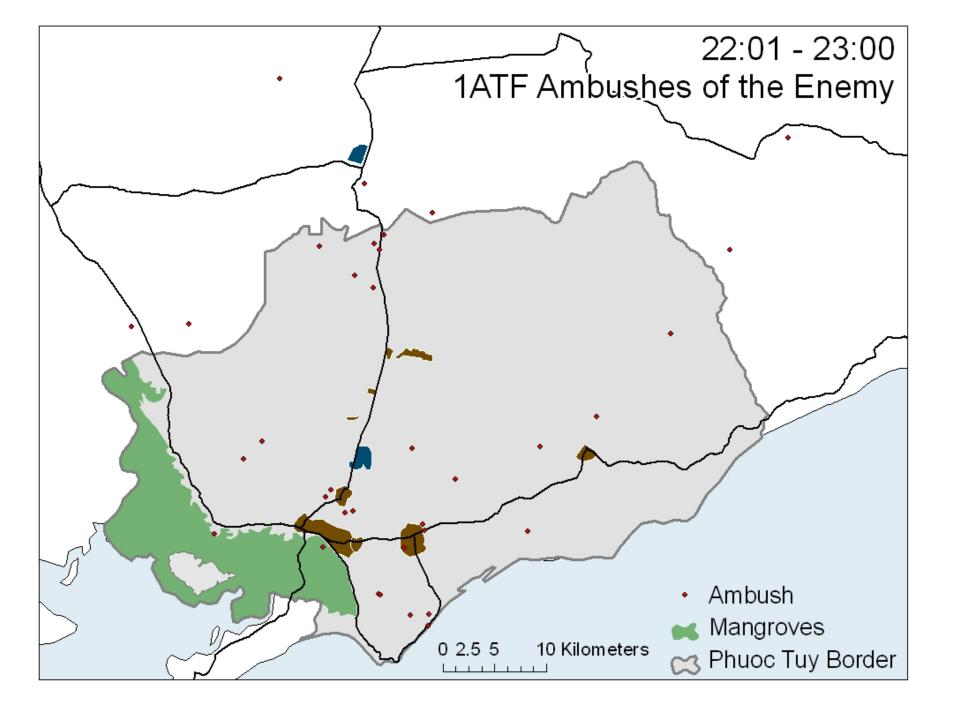


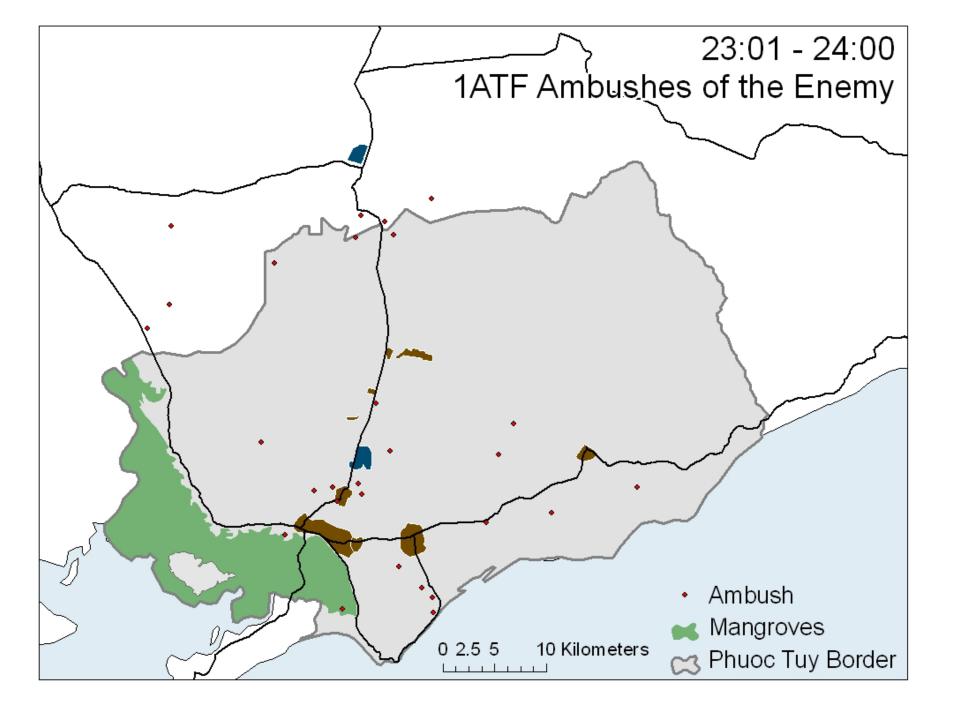


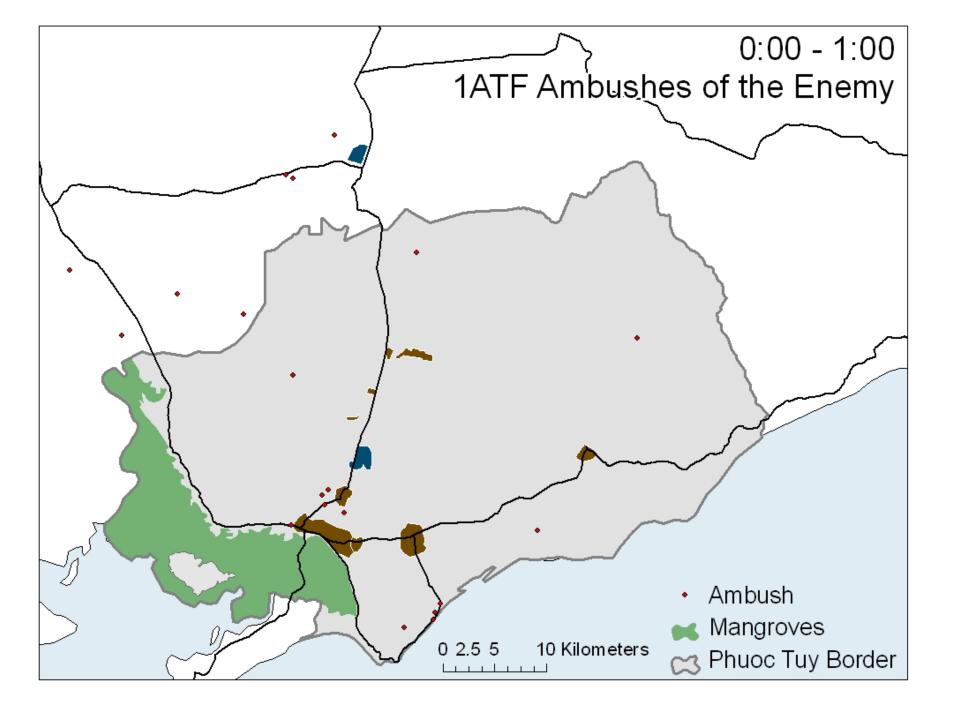


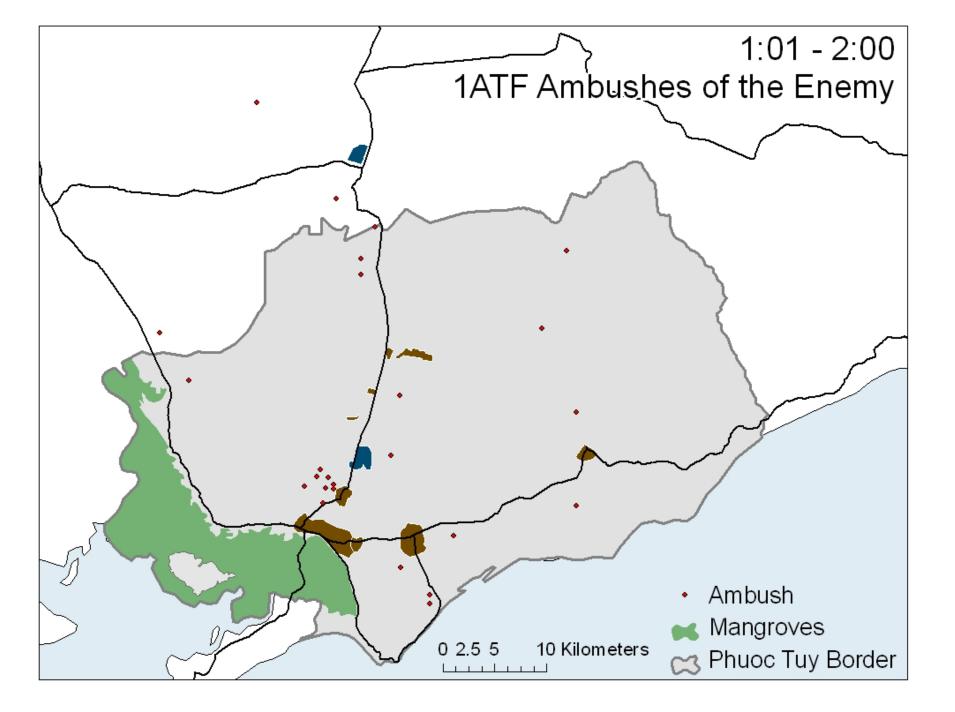


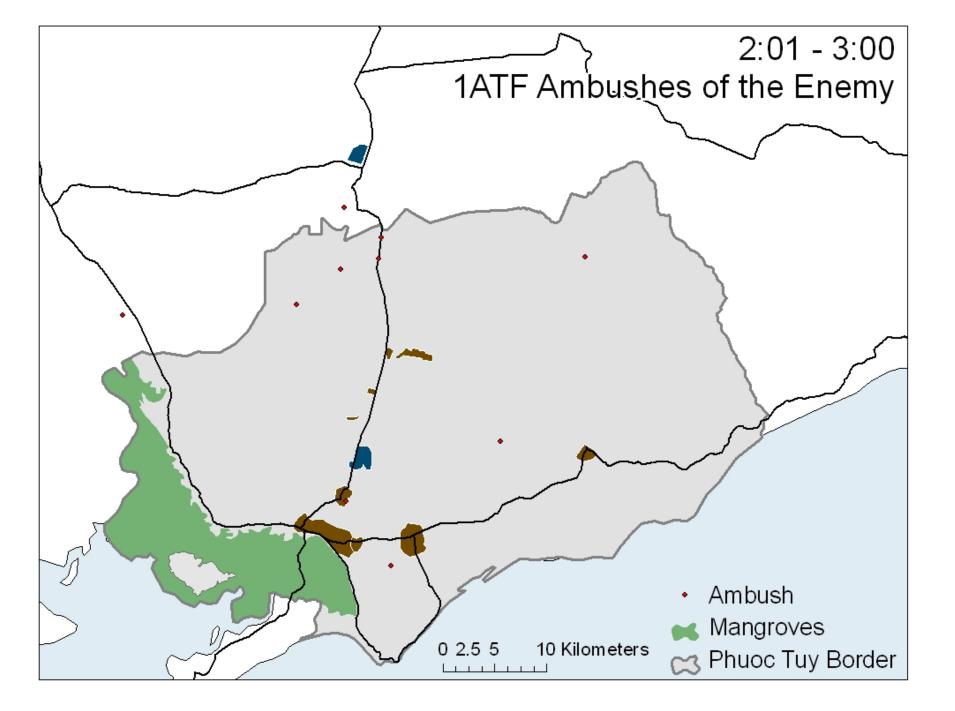


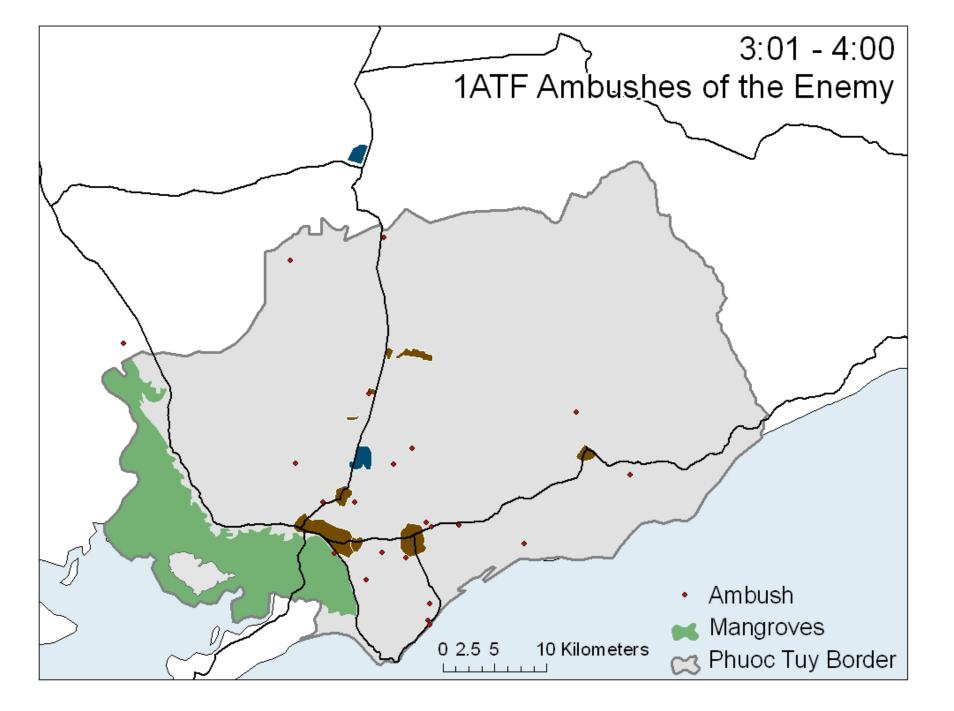


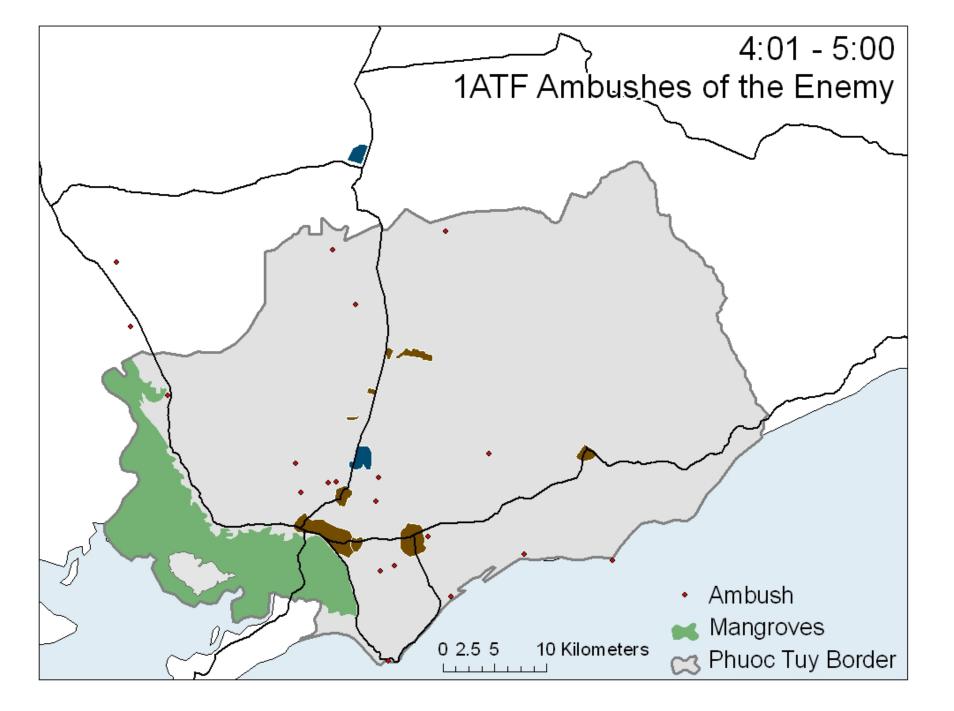


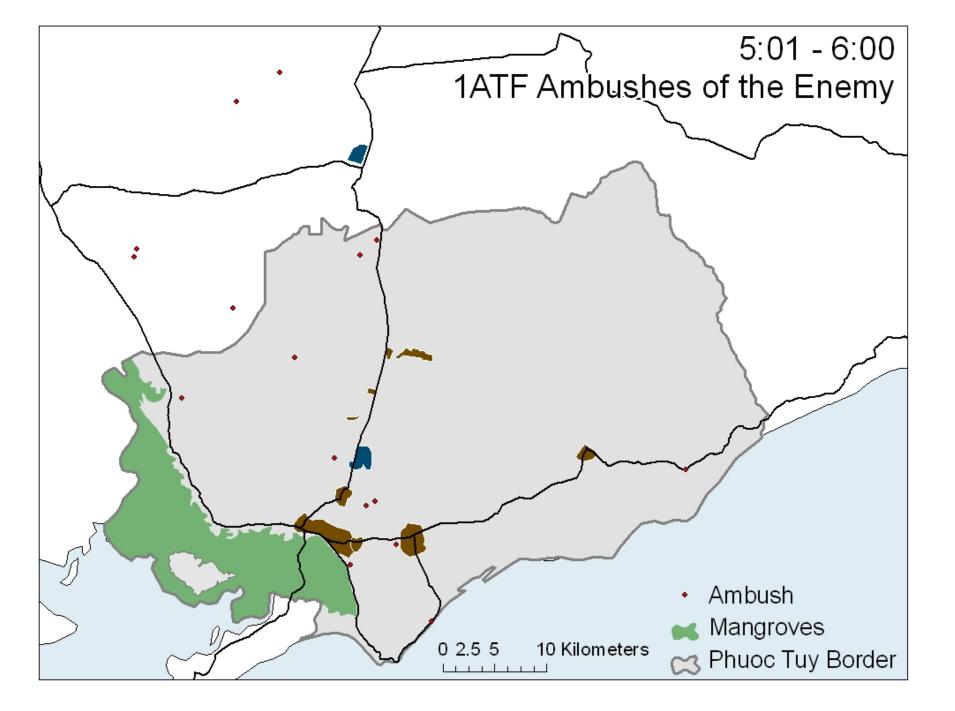


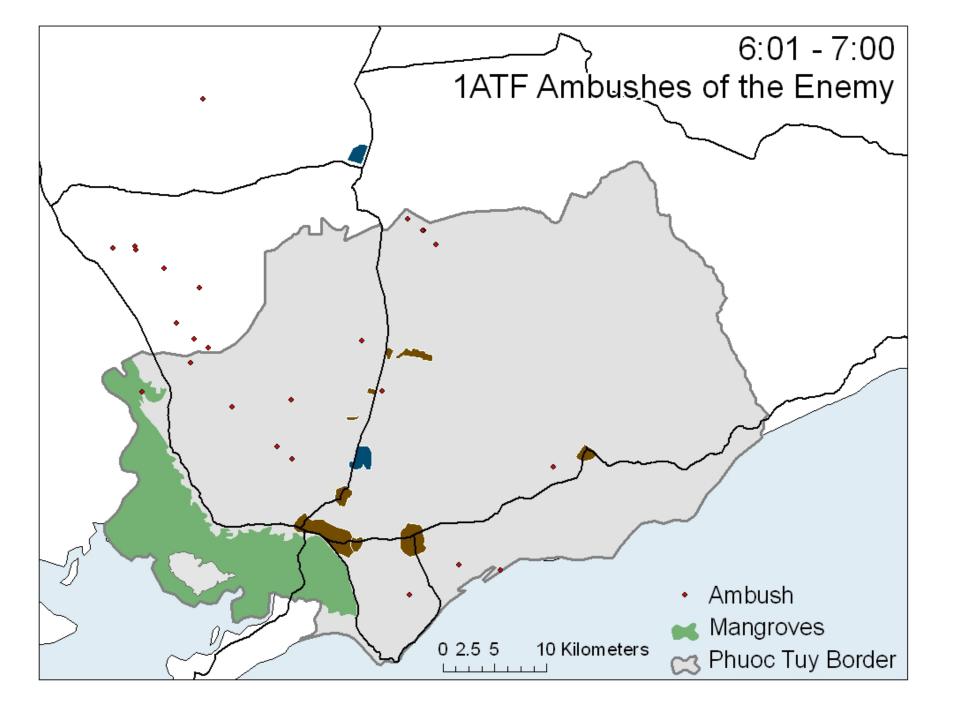


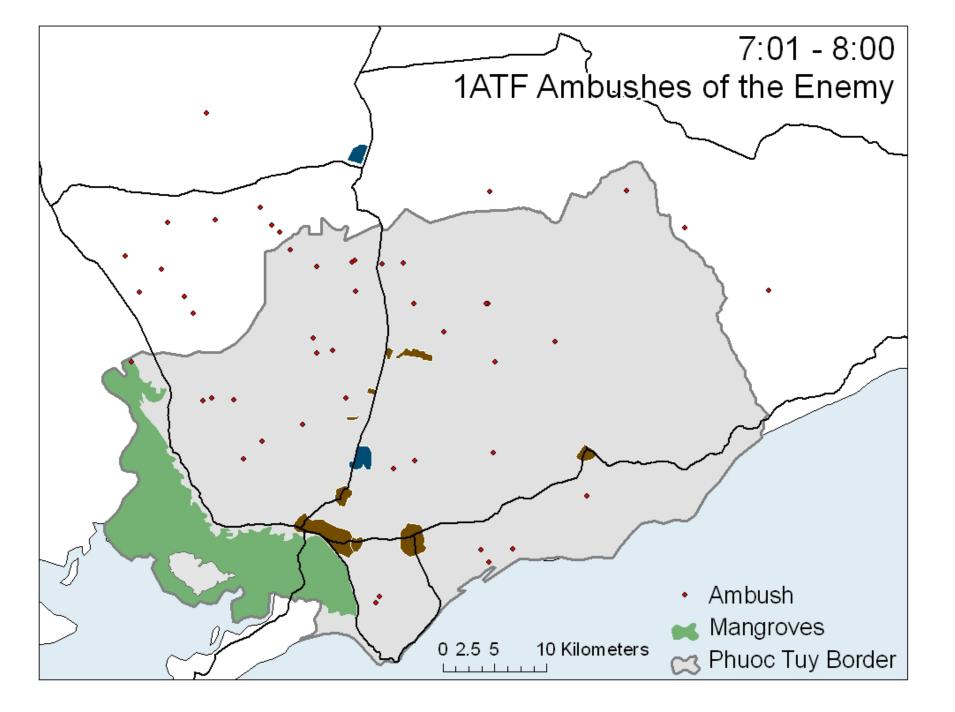


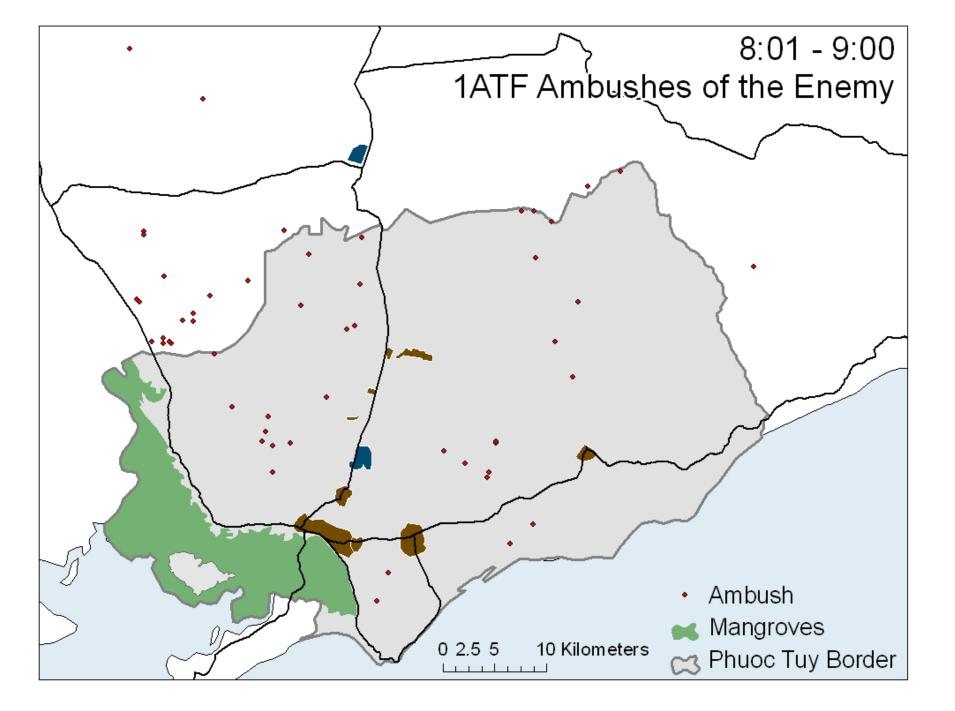


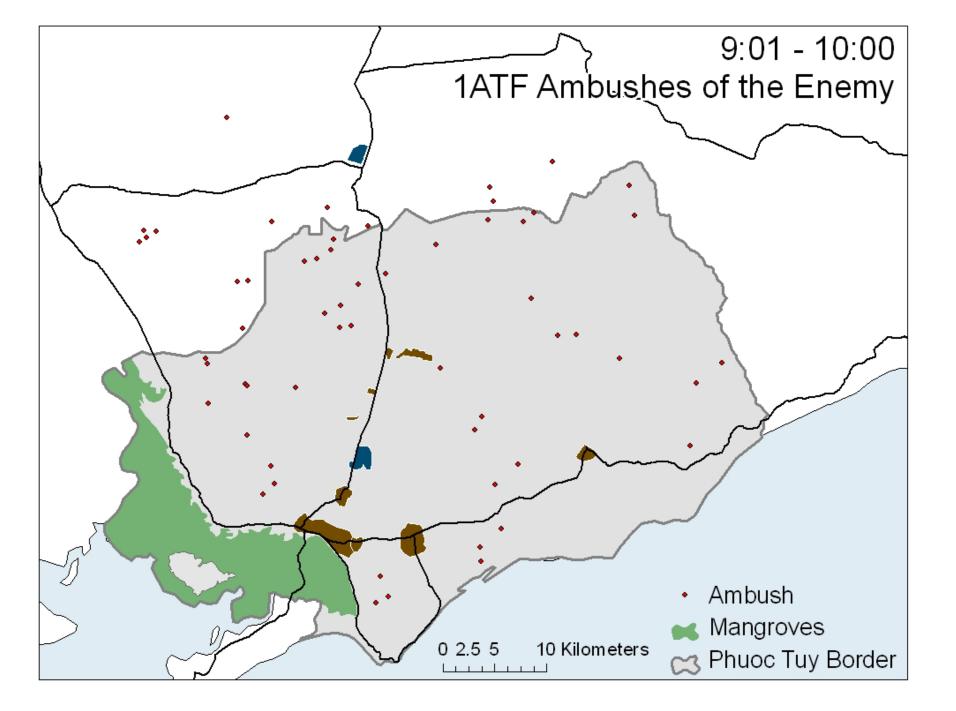


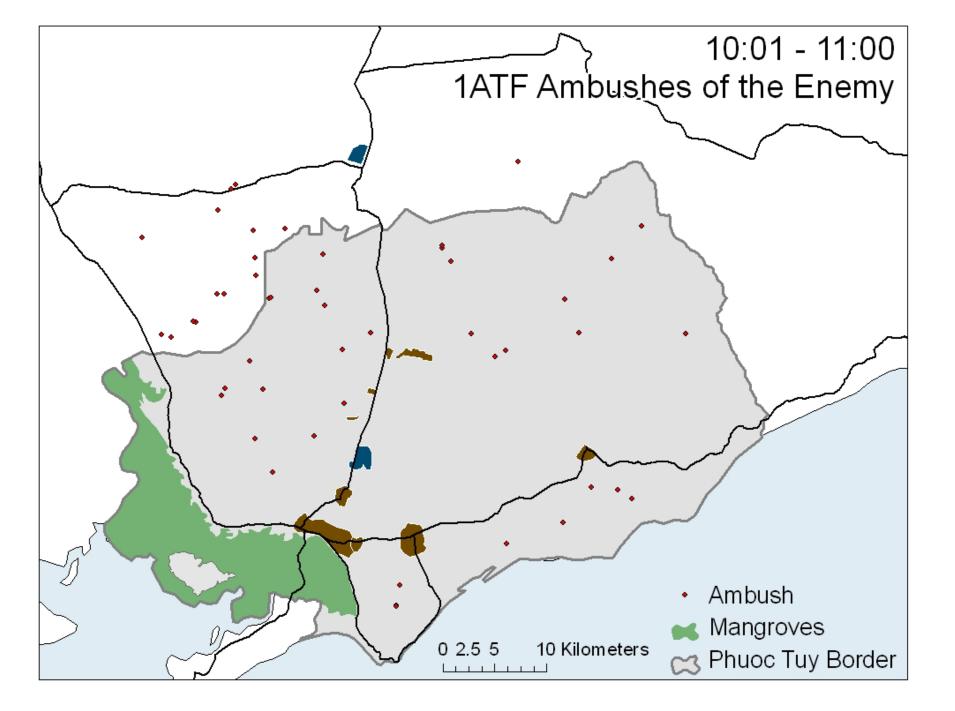


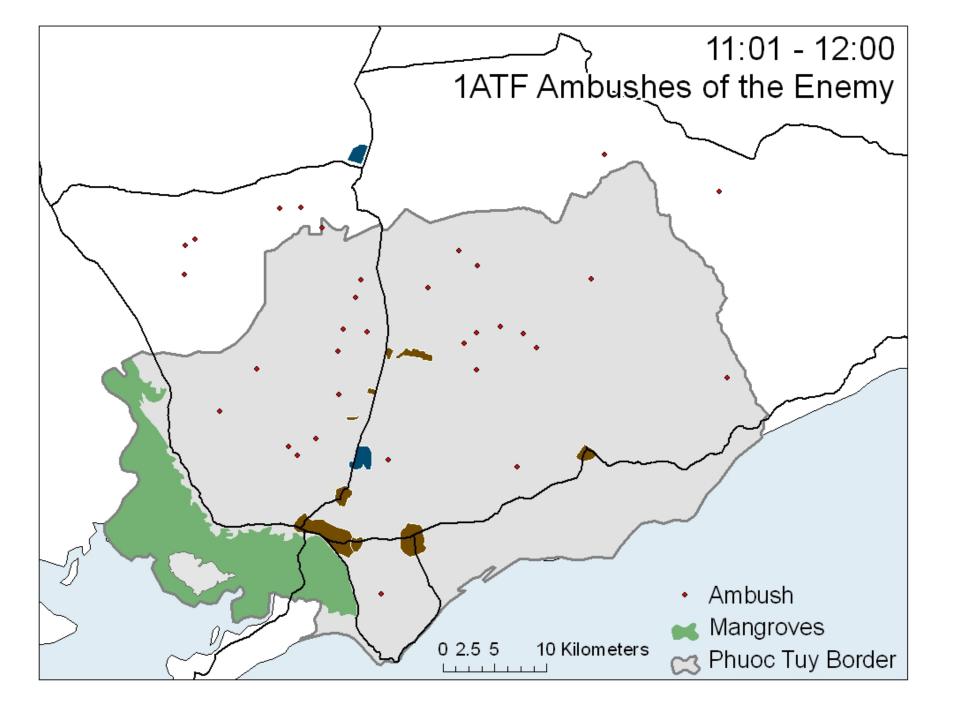


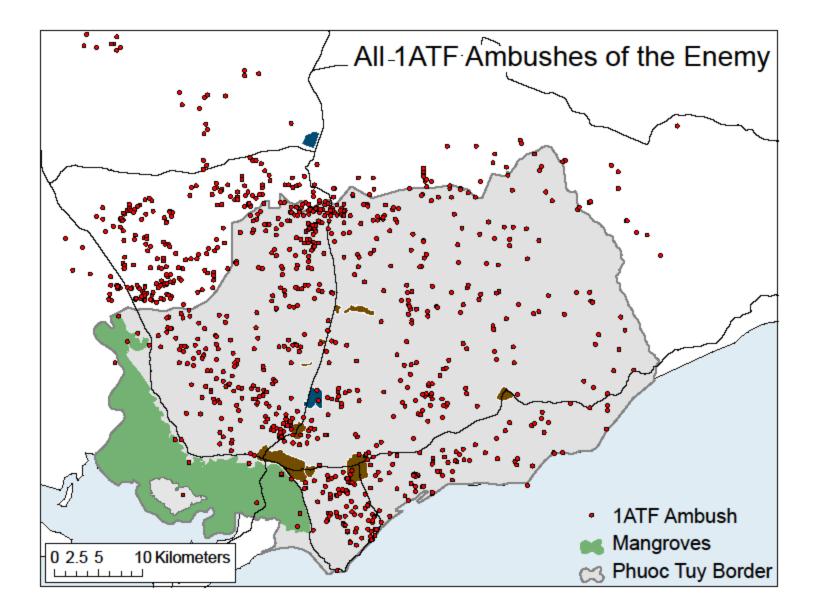












Results of the ambush battle

- Exploited enemy vulnerabilities Requirement to resupply from villages Requirement to communicate between base areas
- Reduced ability to resupply and eventually forced large enemy units out of the Province
- Helped to 'paralyse' enemy forces and keep them off balance
- This led to reduced ability to interfere with pacification and social, political and economic development in the villages.

Where to from here?

- Add non-combat data to the database
- Add non-1ATF data to the database
- Analyse 1ATF combat and non-combat activity in the context of the whole struggle in Phuoc Tuy Province

- Add a Wiki component
- Put everything on the web