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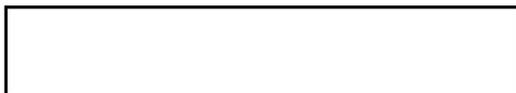
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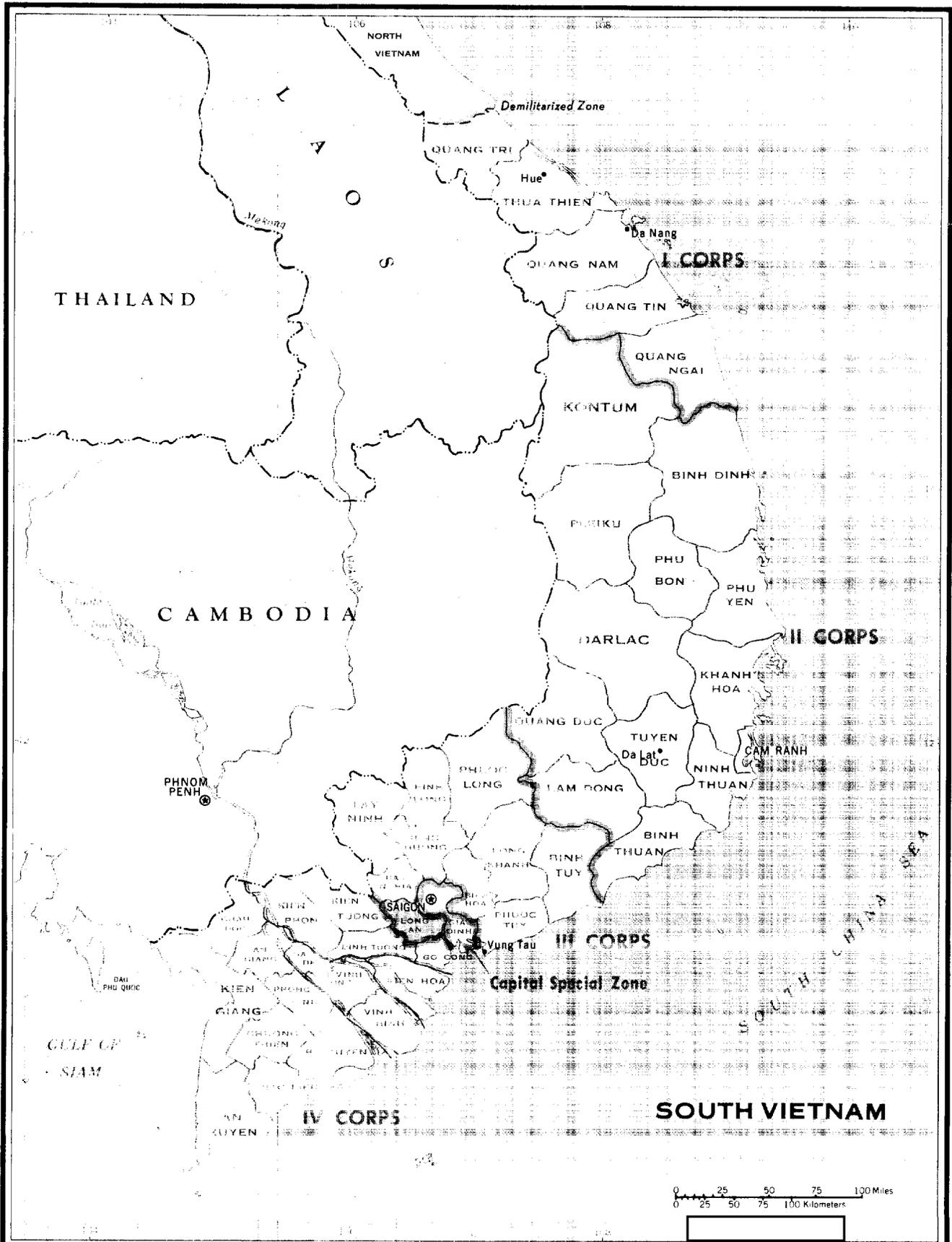
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*South Vietnam: The Communists are continuing intensive offensive actions, apparently as part of their winter-spring campaign.

On 10 December the Viet Cong launched a battalion-size assault on a company of the US 9th Infantry Division in Long An Province in the Mekong Delta. Simultaneously, two other 9th Division installations in nearby villages were hit by small-arms fire. In the main ground attack, part of the enemy force succeeded in penetrating the perimeter of the US company but were driven back after approximately two hours of close-in fighting. Ninth Division reaction forces were deployed along possible enemy withdrawal routes but no additional contact was made with the Viet Cong forces. The attacks left seven Americans and 15 Viet Cong dead and 46 Americans wounded.

On 10 December the Soviet Union made an official statement of concern over possible expansion of the Vietnam war into Laos and Cambodia. The TASS statement condemned alleged "plans" being made in the US to extend military operations into the two countries and predicted that any US attempts to aggravate the situation further in southeast Asia would be "strongly rebuffed by peace-loving nations of the world."

The TASS pronouncement records at a more authoritative level the theme sounded in Soviet media over the past several weeks. It was apparently evoked by extensive press speculation in the US that such an expansion was contemplated. The statement probably was designed primarily to trade on Sihanouk's anxieties concerning possible US intervention and could be the prelude to a concerted propaganda offensive.

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NOTE

Cyprus: Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus probably will agree to a short-term renewal of the present UN peacekeeping mandate, which expires on 26 December, and to defer discussions of an "enlarged" UN role on the island. The Security Council probably will consider the question late this week.

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