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PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION REPORT

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COMMUNIST ROAD NET DEVELOPMENT IN THE LAOTIAN PANHANDLE

NPIC/R-110/66

APRIL 1966

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AUTOMATIC DOWNGRADING
AND DECLASSIFICATION

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COMMUNIST ROAD NET DEVELOPMENT IN THE LAOTIAN PANHANDLE

INTRODUCTION

This report is designed to present an overall view of the road network -- including its development and utilization -- in those areas of the Laotian Panhandle under Pathet Lao/North Vietnamese Army (PL/NVA) control, and to depict the lines of communication available to these forces through [REDACTED]

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The river crossings and facilities (i.e. military camps, truck parks, rest/refuel areas) included within this study are presented as being representative of PL/NVA practices of maintaining, servicing, and securing their logistics net within the Laotian Panhandle.

Trail systems in the Panhandle area will not be included in this report because of the impossibility of distinguishing, through photo interpretation, between native- and communist-used trails.

The information contained in this report is a compilation of intelligence which has been previously disseminated by NPIC in the form of mission coverage indices, mission indices, mission summaries, cables, and briefing boards. All measurements in the text are derived from maps referenced at the end of the report.

BACKGROUND

The Laotian highway system was originally planned and constructed as part of the overall road system of French Indochina. Historically Laos has been the weakest link in the French Indochina road net, primarily due to its remoteness from power centers and its lack of productivity. Development by the French of the Laos road net was confined to construction of the minimum facilities necessary to support basic administrative functions. Laos was brought into the Indochina road net by a single primary road through the Mekong River Valley and a few east-west roads from the Vietnam coast to the Mekong Valley.

The only roads in the Panhandle area of Laos prior to World War II are shown on the map on page 5. The most significant roads are described below.

Route 13

Originally the only north-south route through Laos, Route 13 extended south from Luang Prabang to Vientiane, Pak Sane, across the Cambodia border, and terminated at Saigon.

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Route 8

Beginning at Vinh, Route 8 entered Laos via the Deo Keo Nua (Keo Nua Pass), extended generally southward to Ban Nape, Lak Sao, and terminated at a junction with Route 12 near Mahaxay.

Route 12

One of two east-west highways in the Laotian Panhandle connecting Route 13 with the Vietnam coast roads, Route 12 extended east from Thakhek on the Mekong River, through Mahaxay and the Deo Mu Gia (Mu Gia Pass), to a convergence with Vietnam Route 15.

Route 9

This second east-west highway crossing the Laotian Panhandle extended from Savannakhet, east through Muong Phine and Sepone, to Lao Bao and Dong Ha, Vietnam.

From the beginning of World War II until the end of the first Indochina War in 1954, the French made no significant additions to the road network in the Laotian Panhandle. Since 1954, however, some improvements in the Laotian transportation net have been made by the communists -- the most significant improvement being the reconstruction of the road through Mu Gia Pass and the addition of Route 23, connecting Routes 12 and 9.

Prior to 1963, the communist forces cleared an extensive area west of the Laos/North Vietnam/South Vietnam border in the Laotian Panhandle by capturing Lak Sao, Mahaxay, and Muong Phine. This clearing action assured PL/NVA forces the use of Keo Nua and Mu Gia Passes, and portions of Routes 8, 12, and 23 south to Route 9. However, Royal Laotian control of Saravane and Attopeu, south of Route 9, prevented the use of Route 16 and the southern portion of Route 23 as an extension of the infiltration/transportation net to the south. The motorable road net available to the communist forces as of [REDACTED]

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25X1D [REDACTED] is shown on the map on page 7.

For several years the Laotian Panhandle has provided North Vietnam with a primary avenue for supporting the insurgents in South Vietnam. The sequence of roads, rivers, trails, supply dumps, and base areas that have been observed in the eastern portion of the Panhandle have in many cases been in communist hands for four years or longer. A vast network of trails has existed throughout the area and new trails have been created by PL/NVA forces moving through the area on foot, carrying light equipment. Until recently, trails were the only land routes available to the infiltrators south of Route 9 and they still provide the primary means of crossing the borders of South Vietnam and Cambodia.

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In [REDACTED] communist forces began construction of a road net that would, by [REDACTED] extend from Route 15 and Mu Gia

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Pass to Cambodia. The newly-constructed roads are shown on the map on page 9. This effort obviously carries a high priority, indicated by the fact that North Vietnam, despite a serious need at home, has sent mechanical earth-moving equipment to the Laotian Panhandle road construction program.

With the construction of a motorable road net deep in the communist controlled territory of Laos, as shown on the map on page 11, the capability now exists to move heavy weapons, heavy equipment, and greater amounts of material to the South Vietnam and Cambodia border areas. The ability to carry troops by vehicle also increases the speed with which communist forces can be deployed to the South Vietnam border area.

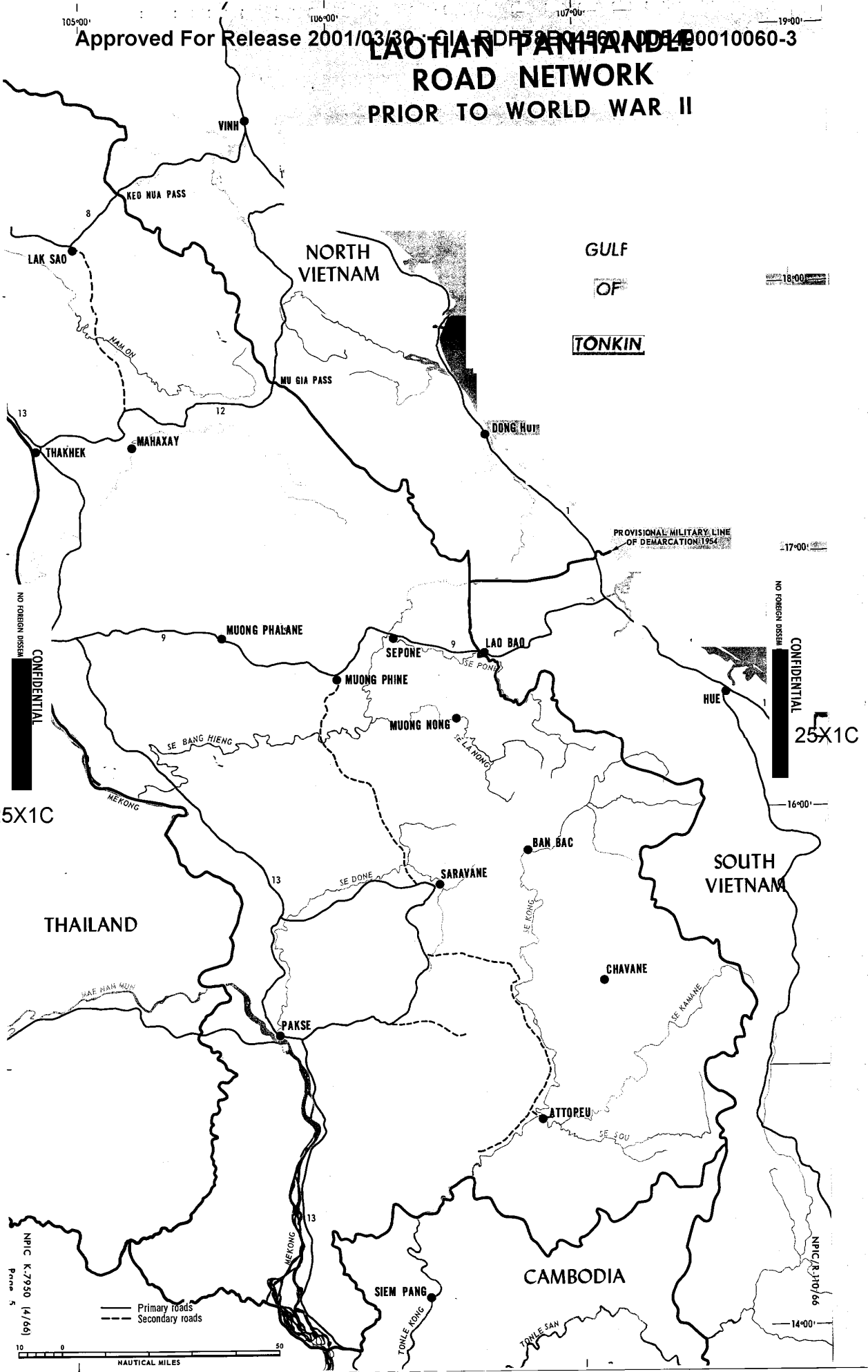
PL/NVA ROAD NET

25X1D The roads which comprise the PL/NVA road net in the Laotian Panhandle are described below in the order in which they progress geographically from north to south. The description will cover the period between [REDACTED] and will be concerned with the changes made during that period and the present status of the roads.

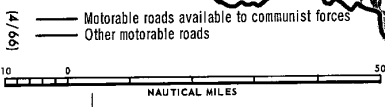
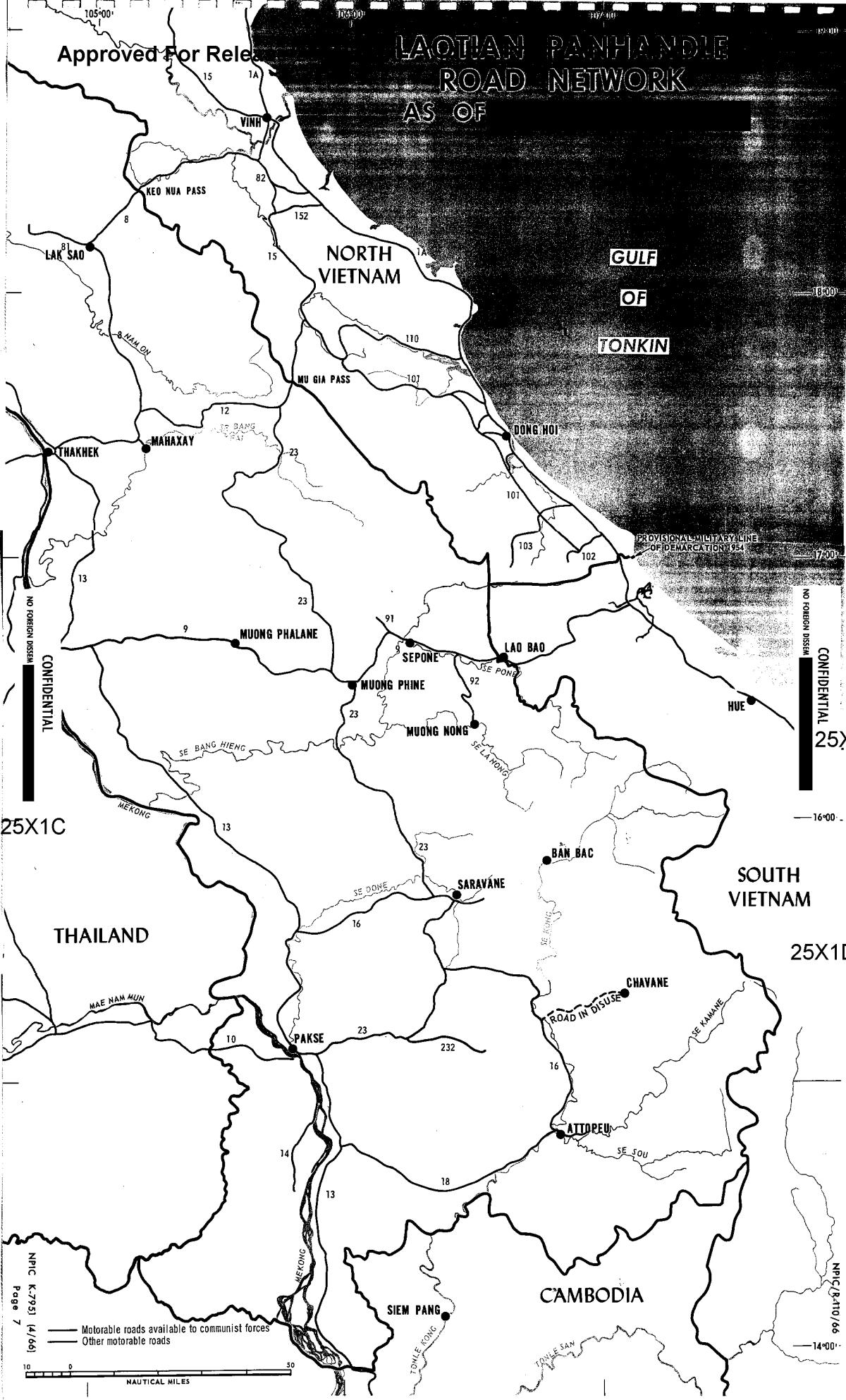
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LAOTIAN PANHANDLE ROAD NETWORK PRIOR TO WORLD WAR II



LAOTIAN PANHANDLE ROAD NETWORK AS OF

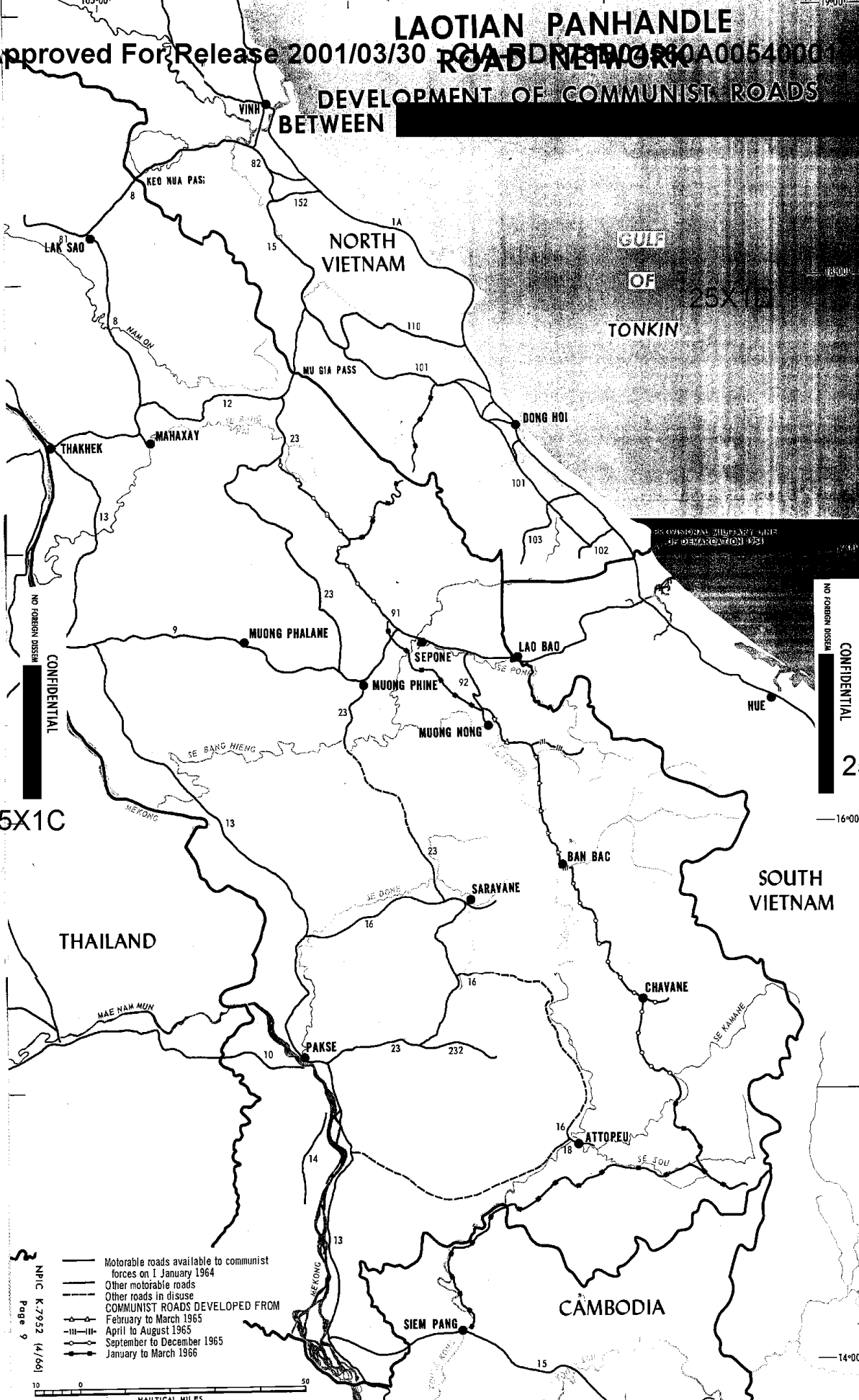


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LAOTIAN PANHANDLE ROAD NETWORK

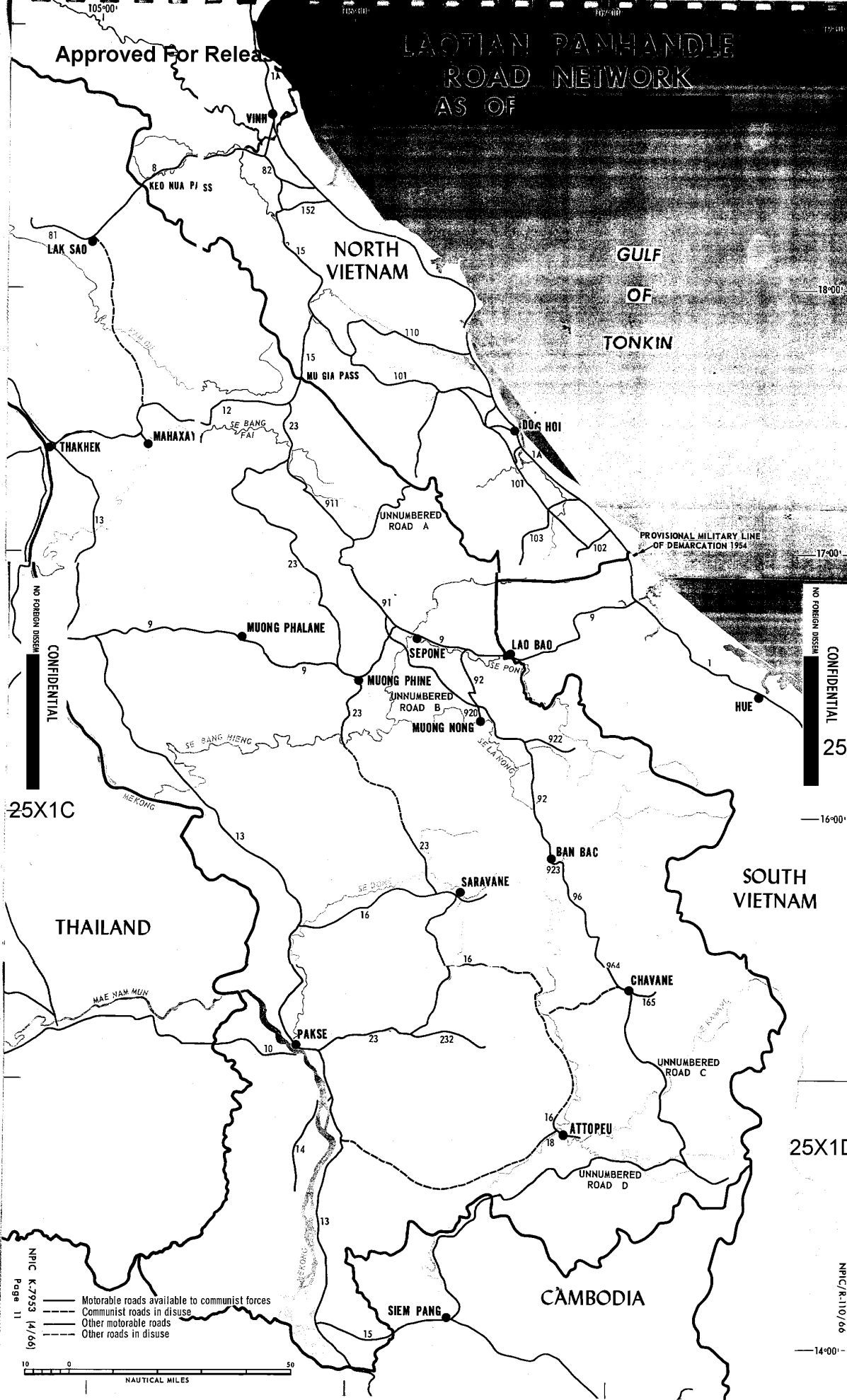
DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNIST ROADS BETWEEN



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LAOTIAN PANHANDLE ROAD NETWORK AS OF



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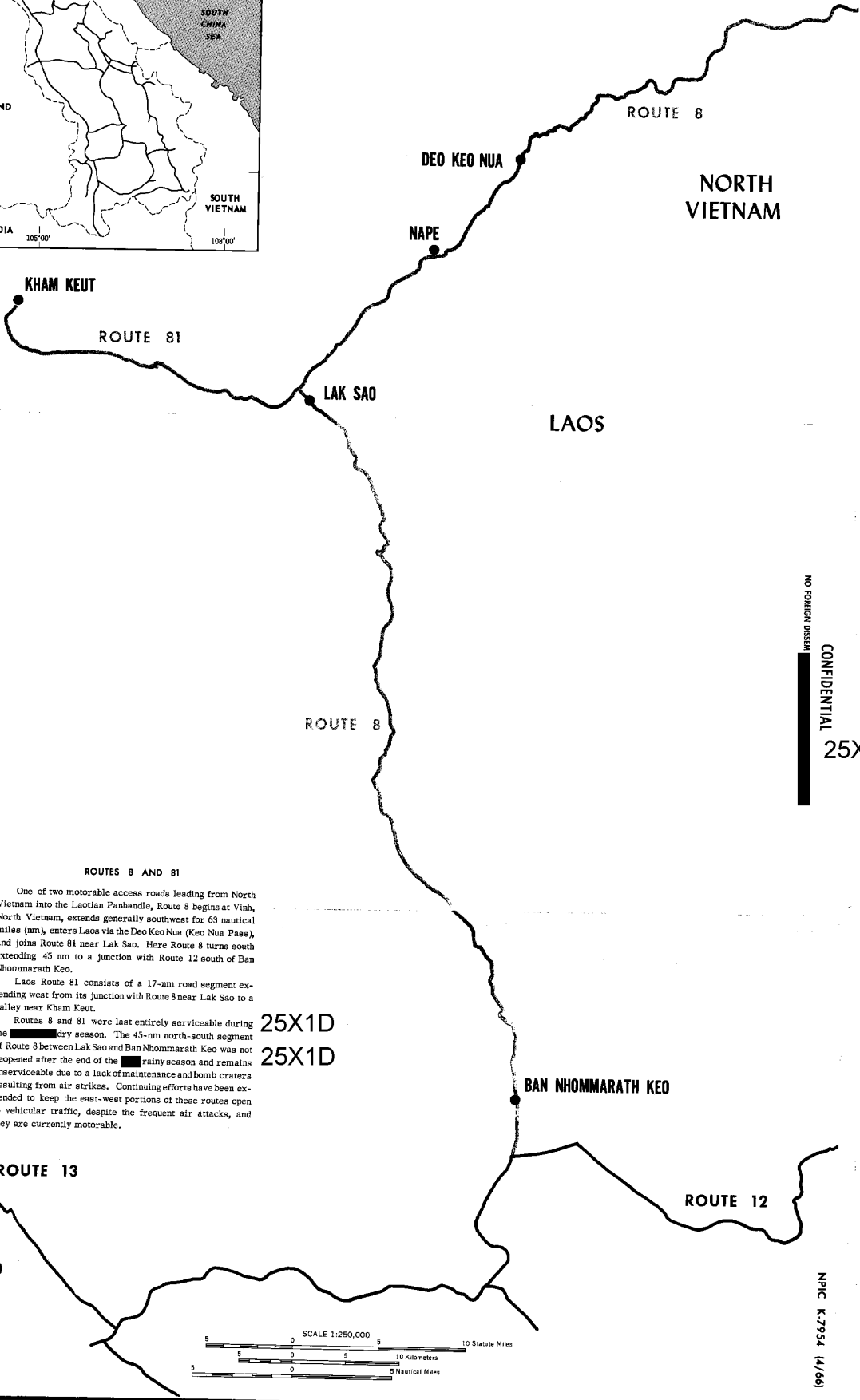
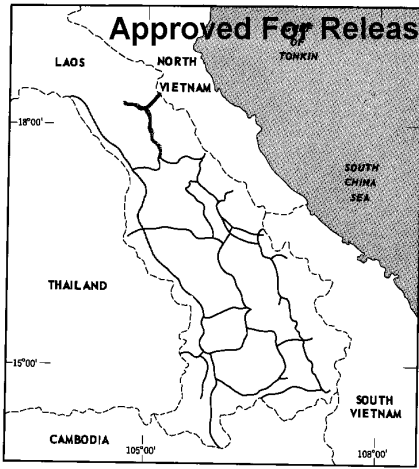
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ROUTES 8 AND 81

One of two motorable access roads leading from North Vietnam into the Laotian Panhandle, Route 8 begins at Vinh, North Vietnam, extends generally southwest for 63 nautical miles (nm), enters Laos via the Deo Keo Nua (Keo Nua Pass), and joins Route 81 near Lak Sao. Here Route 8 turns south extending 45 nm to a junction with Route 12 south of Ban Nhommarath Keo.

Laos Route 81 consists of a 17-nm road segment extending west from its junction with Route 8 near Lak Sao to a valley near Kham Keut.

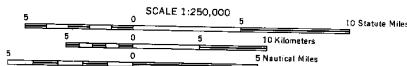
Routes 8 and 81 were last entirely serviceable during the [redacted] dry season. The 45-nm north-south segment of Route 8 between Lak Sao and Ban Nhommarath Keo was not reopened after the end of the [redacted] rainy season and remains unserviceable due to a lack of maintenance and bomb craters resulting from air strikes. Continuing efforts have been expended to keep the east-west portions of these routes open to vehicular traffic, despite the frequent air attacks, and they are currently motorable.

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ROUTE 13

ROUTE 12

BAN NHOMMARATH KEO



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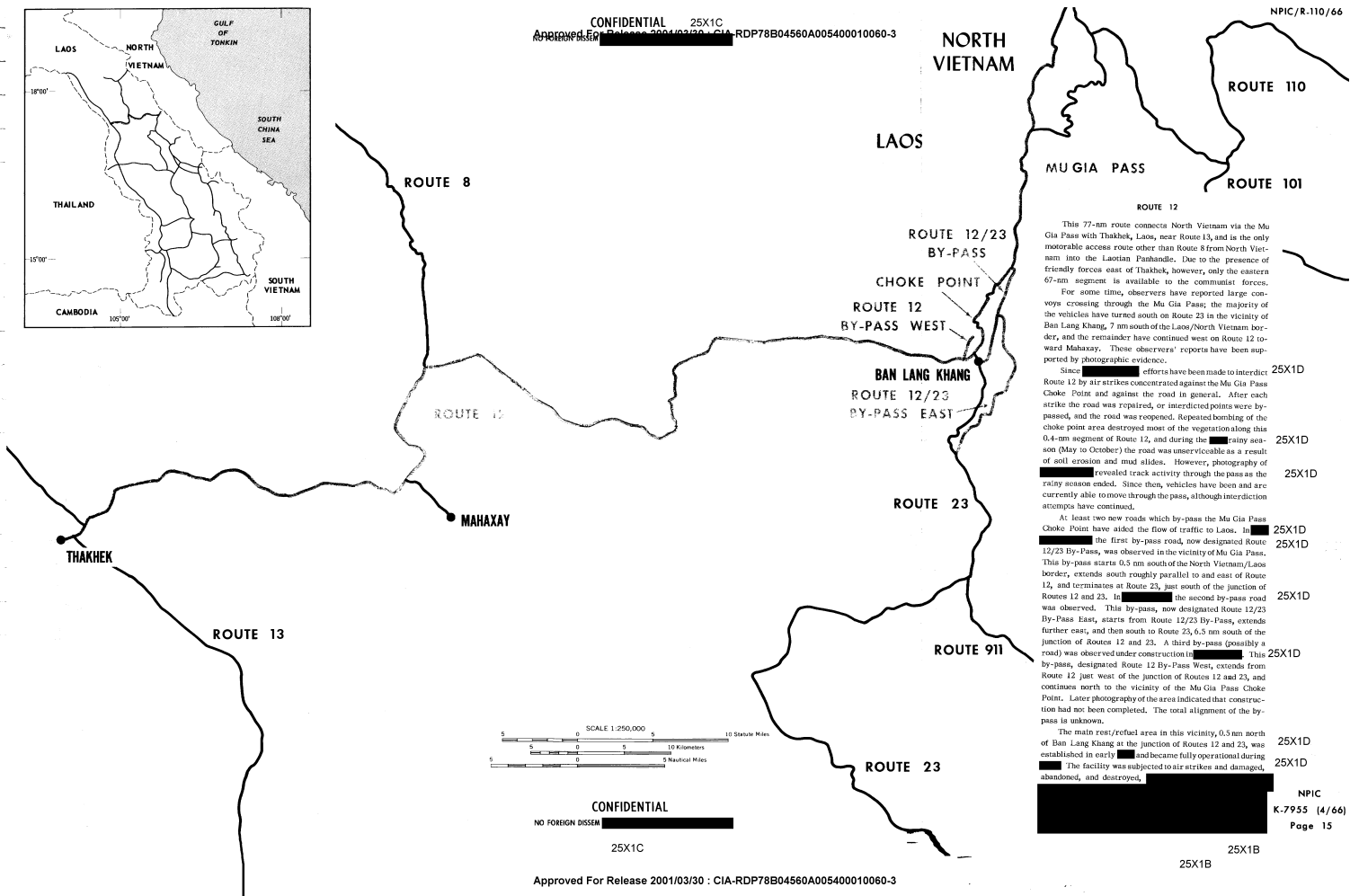
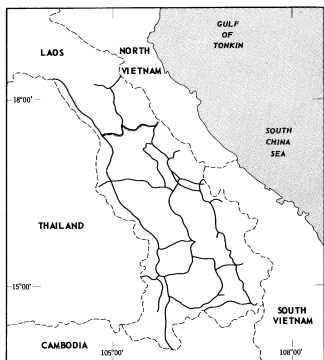
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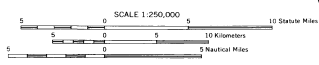


This 77-nm route connects North Vietnam via the Mu Gia Pass with Thakhek, Laos, near Route 13, and is the only motorable access route other than Route 8 from North Vietnam into the Laotian Panhandle. Due to the presence of friendly forces east of Thakhek, however, only the eastern 67-nm segment is available to the communist forces. For some time, observers have reported large convoys crossing through the Mu Gia Pass; the majority of the vehicles have turned south on Route 23 in the vicinity of Ban Lang Khang, 7 nm south of the Laos/North Vietnam border, and the remainder have continued west on Route 12 toward Mahaxay. These observers' reports have been supported by photographic evidence.

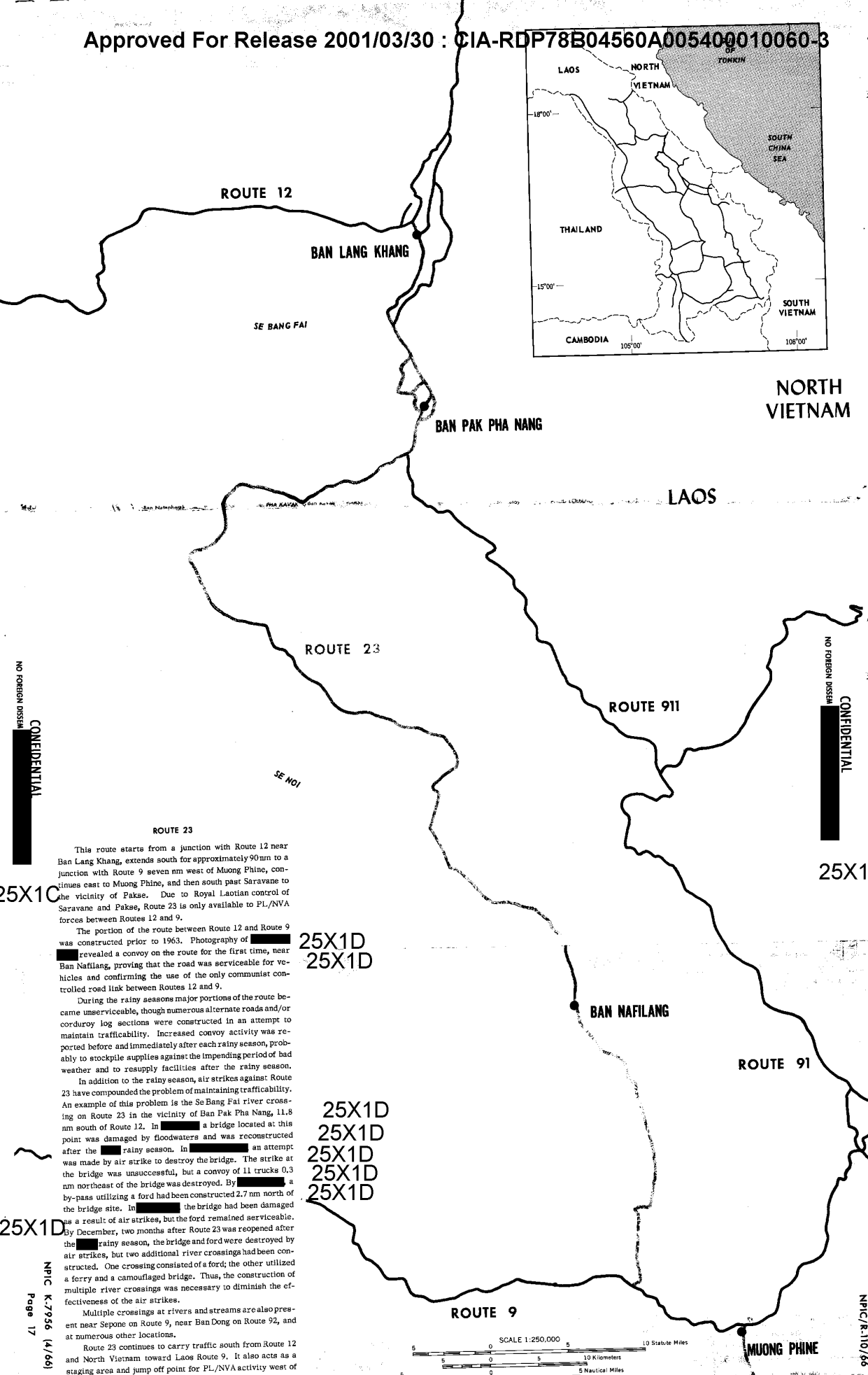
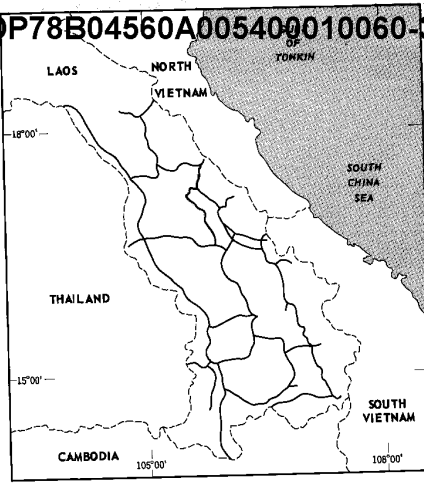
Since [redacted] efforts have been made to interdict Route 12 by air strikes concentrated against the Mu Gia Pass Choke Point and against the road in general. After each strike the road was repaired, or interdicted points were by-passed, and the road was reopened. Repeated bombing of the choke point area destroyed most of the vegetation along this 0.4-nm segment of Route 12, and during the [redacted] rainy season (May to October) the road was unserviceable as a result of soil erosion and mud slides. However, photography of [redacted] revealed track activity through the pass as the rainy season ended. Since then, vehicles have been and are currently able to move through the pass, although interdiction attempts have continued.

At least two new roads which by-pass the Mu Gia Pass Choke Point have aided the flow of traffic to Laos. In [redacted] the first by-pass road, now designated Route 12/23 By-Pass, was observed in the vicinity of Mu Gia Pass. This by-pass starts 0.5 nm south of the North Vietnam/Laos border, extends south roughly parallel to and east of Route 12, and terminates at Route 23, just south of the junction of Routes 12 and 23. In [redacted] the second by-pass road was observed. This by-pass, now designated Route 12/23 By-Pass East, starts from Route 12/23 By-Pass, extends further east, and then south to Route 23, 6.5 nm south of the junction of Routes 12 and 23. A third by-pass (possibly a road) was observed under construction in [redacted]. This 25X1D by-pass, designated Route 12 By-Pass West, extends from Route 12 just west of the junction of Routes 12 and 23, and continues north to the vicinity of the Mu Gia Pass Choke Point. Later photography of the area indicated that construction had not been completed. The total alignment of the by-pass is unknown.

The main road/trail area in this vicinity, 0.5 nm north of Ban Lang Khang at the junction of Routes 12 and 23, was established in early [redacted] and became fully operational during [redacted]. The facility was subjected to air strikes and damaged, abandoned, and destroyed, [redacted]



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ROUTE 23

This route starts from a junction with Route 12 near Ban Lang Khang, extends south for approximately 90 nm to a junction with Route 9 seven nm west of Muong Phine, continues east to Muong Phine, and then south past Saravane to the vicinity of Pakse. Due to Royal Laotian control of Saravane and Pakse, Route 23 is only available to PL/NVA forces between Routes 12 and 9.

The portion of the route between Route 12 and Route 9 was constructed prior to 1963. Photography of [redacted] revealed a convoy on the route for the first time, near Ban Nafiang, proving that the road was serviceable for vehicles and confirming the use of the only communist controlled road link between Routes 12 and 9.

During the rainy seasons major portions of the route became unserviceable, though numerous alternate roads and/or corduroy log sections were constructed in an attempt to maintain trafficability. Increased convoy activity was reported before and immediately after each rainy season, probably to stockpile supplies against the impending period of bad weather and to resupply facilities after the rainy season.

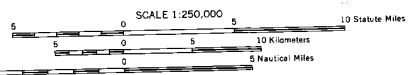
In addition to the rainy season, air strikes against Route 23 have compounded the problem of maintaining trafficability. An example of this problem is the Se Bang Fai river crossing on Route 23 in the vicinity of Ban Pak Pha Nang, 11.8 nm south of Route 12. In [redacted] a bridge located at this point was damaged by floodwaters and was reconstructed after the [redacted] rainy season. In [redacted] an attempt was made by air strike to destroy the bridge. The strike at the bridge was unsuccessful, but a convoy of 11 trucks 0.3 nm northeast of the bridge was destroyed. By [redacted] a by-pass utilizing a ford had been constructed 2.7 nm north of the bridge site. In [redacted] the bridge had been damaged as a result of air strikes, but the ford remained serviceable. By December, two months after Route 23 was reopened after the [redacted] rainy season, the bridge and ford were destroyed by air strikes, but two additional river crossings had been constructed. One crossing consisted of a ford; the other utilized a ferry and a camouflaged bridge. Thus, the construction of multiple river crossings was necessary to diminish the effectiveness of the air strikes.

Multiple crossings at rivers and streams are also present near Sepone on Route 9, near Ban Dong on Route 92, and at numerous other locations.

Route 23 continues to carry traffic south from Route 12 and North Vietnam toward Laos Route 9. It also acts as a staging area and jump off point for PL/NVA activity west of Route 23 near the Se Noi River.

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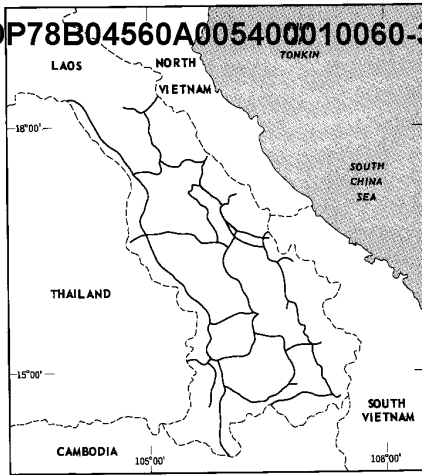
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ROUTE 12

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ROUTE 23

LAOS

BAN SOM PENG

ROUTE 911

UNNUMBERED ROAD A

ROUTE 23

ROUTE 911/91

The route designators 911 and 91 refer to one continuous motorable road, approximately 55 nm long, which parallels and is east of the portion of Route 23 which connects Route 12 with Route 9. The northern portion of this road, or Route 911, extends from its junction with Route 23 at Ban Som Peng (15 nm south of Route 12), generally south and southeastward to a point on the Nam Mi River 10 nm northwest of Route 9 and 13.5 nm northwest of Sepone. From that point southeastward to its junction with Route 9, the road is designated as Route 91 due to a previously existing numbered route which had extended part of the way north from Route 9 and had been so designated.

The Route 911 portion of this road was first observed to be under construction in early [redacted] By mid- [redacted] it had reached the previously existing Route 91, which formerly had been motorable for only 5 nm northwest from its junction with Route 9 (1.5 nm past Ban Nahi).

In order to increase the all-weather capability of this road, some segments have been given gravel or corduroy road surfacing. Bridges and stream culverts have been constructed, with fords being utilized at the main streams. An attempt has also been made to construct the entire route on higher ground than that of Route 23.

The completed Route 911/91 not only by-passes the poorer section of Route 23 and will probably allow year-round vehicle traffic due to greater all-weather capability, but is also approximately 43 nm shorter than if Route 23 and 9 are used, thus providing the PL/NVA forces a more direct route to southern Laos. Photography indicates that Route 911/91 is currently being more heavily used than the portion of Route 23 which it parallels.

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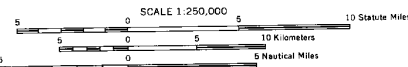
BAN NAHI

ROUTE 91

SEPONE

ROUTE 9 MUONG PHINE

UNNUMBERED ROAD B



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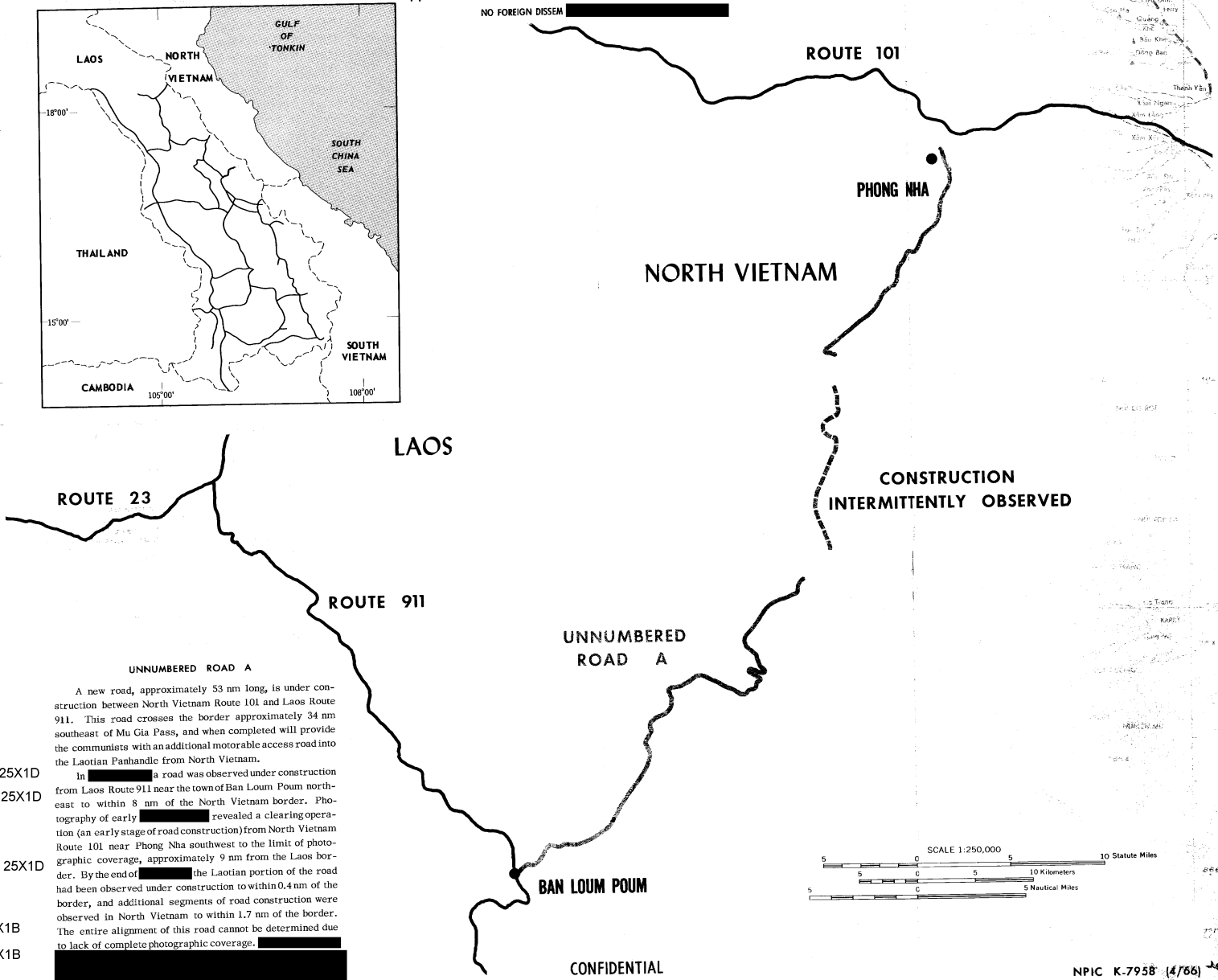
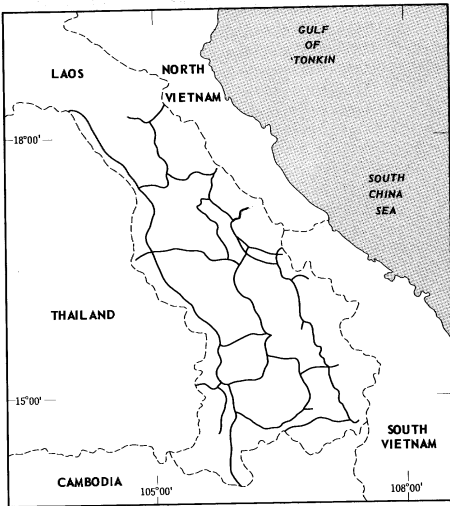
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ROUTE 23

ROUTE 101

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CONSTRUCTION INTERMITTENTLY OBSERVED

ROUTE 911

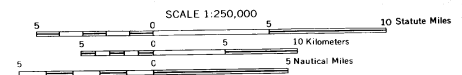
UNNUMBERED ROAD A

BAN LOUM POUM

UNNUMBERED ROAD A

A new road, approximately 53 nm long, is under construction between North Vietnam Route 101 and Laos Route 911. This road crosses the border approximately 34 nm southeast of Mu Gia Pass, and when completed will provide the communists with an additional motorable access road into the Laotian Panhandle from North Vietnam.

25X1D In [REDACTED] a road was observed under construction from Laos Route 911 near the town of Ban Loum Poup northeast to within 8 nm of the North Vietnam border. Photographs of early [REDACTED] revealed a clearing operation (an early stage of road construction) from North Vietnam Route 101 near Phong Nha southwest to the limit of photographic coverage, approximately 9 nm from the Laos border. By the end of [REDACTED] the Laotian portion of the road had been observed under construction to within 0.4 nm of the border, and additional segments of road construction were observed in North Vietnam to within 1.7 nm of the border. The entire alignment of this road cannot be determined due to lack of complete photographic coverage. [REDACTED]



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ROUTE 9

This east-west route extends westward from Dong Ha, South Vietnam, through Lao Bao, South Vietnam, to Route 13 and Savannakhet in Laos, connecting the north-south Routes 91, 91 and 23 with north-south Route 92.

Route 9 was the best road in the Laotian Panhandle prior to the PL attainment of the area and was the southernmost motorable road available to PL/NVA forces before the completion of Route 92 in [REDACTED]. Because of Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) troops at Lao Bao, South Vietnam, and Royal Laotian troops at Ban Houei Sane and Muong Phalane, Laos, only about 65 km of Route 9 -- beginning at a point west of its junction with Route 23 (west of Muong Phine), east through Sepone, to points near the Laos/South Vietnam border -- could be utilized in the PL/NVA infiltration/transportation net.

Although rated as a good road, Route 9 is the target of repeated air strikes, is adversely affected by rainy weather, and is lacking in serviceable bridges; however, none of these conditions has closed this route for prolonged periods of time. For example, the bridge crossing the Se Bang Hieng River in the vicinity of Sepone was first damaged by high water and then destroyed by air strikes; however, ferry crossings and, when water level permits, a river ford still allow crossing of the river. Air strikes have not been able to damage or destroy all of these crossings at any one time.

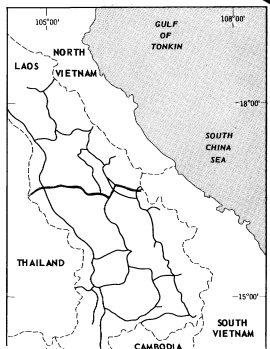
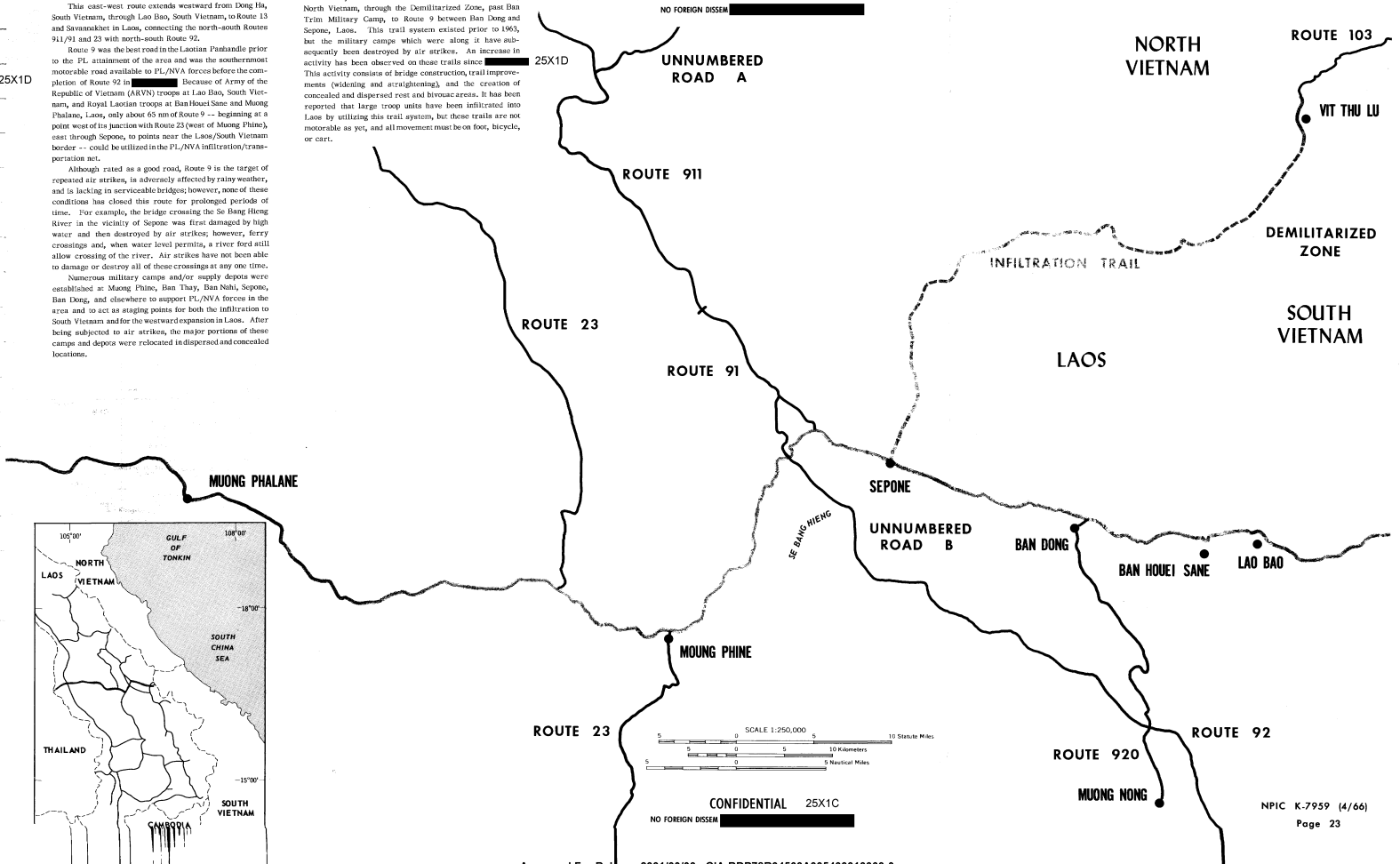
Numerous military camps and/or supply depots were established at Muong Phine, Ban Thai, Ban Nahi, Sepone, Ban Dong, and elsewhere to support PL/NVA forces in the area and to act as staging points for both the infiltration to South Vietnam and for the westward expansion in Laos. After being subjected to air strikes, the major portions of these camps and depots were relocated in dispersed and concealed locations.

Route 9 is also linked with North Vietnam via an extensive trail system between the end of Route 103 at Vit Thu Lu, North Vietnam, through the Demilitarized Zone, past Ban Trim Military Camp, to Route 9 between Ban Dong and Sepone, Laos. This trail system existed prior to 1963, but the military camps which were along it have subsequently been destroyed by air strikes. An increase in activity has been observed on these trails since [REDACTED]. This activity consists of bridge construction, trail improvements (widening and straightening), and the creation of concealed and dispersed rest and bivouac areas. It has been reported that large troop units have been infiltrated into Laos by utilizing this trail system, but these trails are not motorable as yet, and all movement must be on foot, bicycle, or cart.

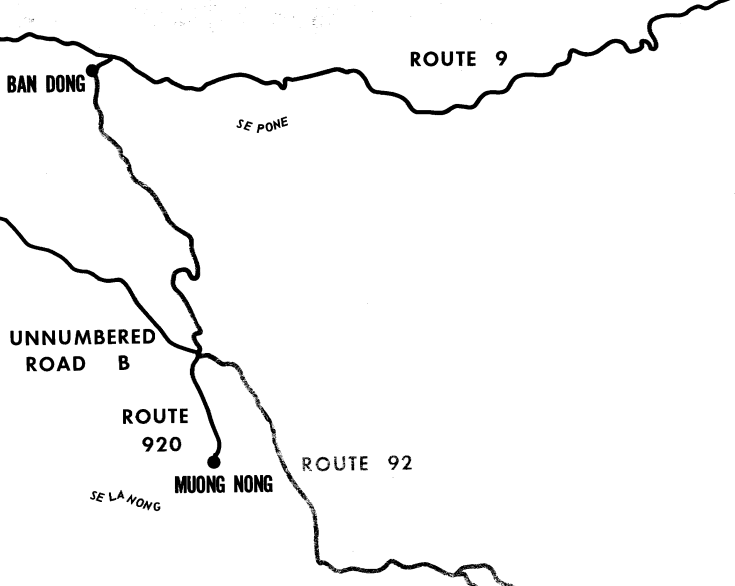
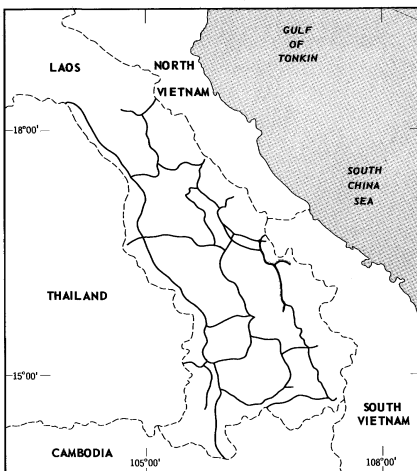
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Route 92 is the 64-nm road link which, paralleling the Laos/South Vietnam border, extends south and southeastward from its junction with Route 9 at Ban Dong and terminates at the Se Kong River in the vicinity of Ban Bac, 21 nm east-northeast of Saravane. North of Route 9 only a system of trails leads to the Vietnam Demilitarized Zone.

Prior to 1963 a road utilized only by non-vehicular traffic existed between Ban Dong and Muong Nong, a town on the Se La Nong River, 19 nm south of Ban Dong. In [redacted] a new road, now designated Route 92, was observed following the alignment of the previously existing road to Muong Nong, but turning eastward along a previously existing trail 4 nm north of Muong Nong, and extending generally southeast to the limit of photographic coverage near the Se La Mang River. At the same time, a ferry crossing across the Se Pone River at Ban Dong provided access to this road from Route 9; and vehicular tracks and one vehicle were noted along the road, confirming its use. One month later a portion of this route was observed in the vicinity of Ban Bac, on the navigable north-south Se Kong River.

Due to a lack of photographic coverage, the total alignment of Route 92 was not observed until [redacted] when the route was confirmed to have been extended along the east side of the Se Kong River to a point 6 nm south of Ban Bac. This was the southernmost penetration into Laos of the communist road net prior to the [redacted] rainy season. The extension south of Ban Bac, however, is no longer used by vehicles.

Also in [redacted] numerous non-Indigenous canoes were noted utilizing previously unobserved channels through and portage points around river rapids on the Se Kong River, south of Route 92. The use of this river in the PL/NVA/VC infiltration/transportation net appeared to extend to a point 21 nm south of Ban Bac where a trail led to Chavane. This water-borne infiltration system probably did not proceed south of this point, since no channels or portages could be identified even though the rapids areas became more extensive. Infiltration activity of this nature was not observed on photography after the [redacted] rainy season when the water level in the Se Kong dropped.

In [redacted] a road (designated alternate Route 92 on the accompanying map) was observed under construction west of Route 92. The new road extends west and south from its junction with Route 92, 7 nm north of Ban Bac, to its convergence with the Se Kong River, 0.9 nm southwest of Ban Bac, and provides an approximately 10-nm by-pass of the southern segment of Route 92. Since its completion, probably in [redacted] the alternate route has been used more extensively than the original road.

Route 92 has limited all-weather capability because only a few bridges have been constructed (most streams being crossed by means of fords), old trails have been utilized where possible, and only short sections of the road have been surfaced. In [redacted] pontoon ferries were observed where Route 92 crossed the rain-swollen Se Pone and Thoun Hou Rivers, and numerous piles of logs and stones were noted along the road for repair of those portions made impassable by the bad weather. The route had limited use during the [redacted] rainy season. Since it now forms a major link in the road net, it is being used extensively.

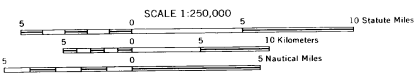
SARAVANE

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Route 922 is a 16-nm motorable road which begins at a junction with Route 92, 32nm south-southeast of Ban Dong, and extends eastward toward the South Vietnam border. In [redacted] a trail was observed extending east from Route 92. By [redacted] this trail, now designated as Route 922, had become a motorable road with a rest/refuel area at its junction with Route 92. Route 922 was observed to the limits of photography, a point 12.2 nm west-southwest of the Laos/South Vietnam border. In [redacted] the terminus of the route was within 6.3 nm of the border. A suspect staging area with a high level of track activity and numerous trails radiating toward South Vietnam was observed at this terminus and another staging area was observed 1 nm west of the terminus. In addition, a second rest/refuel area was identified at the junction of Routes 92 and 922. Although Route 92 is used in the movement of materiel toward the South Vietnam border, it still terminated at the same point, 6.3 nm from the border, on [redacted] photography.

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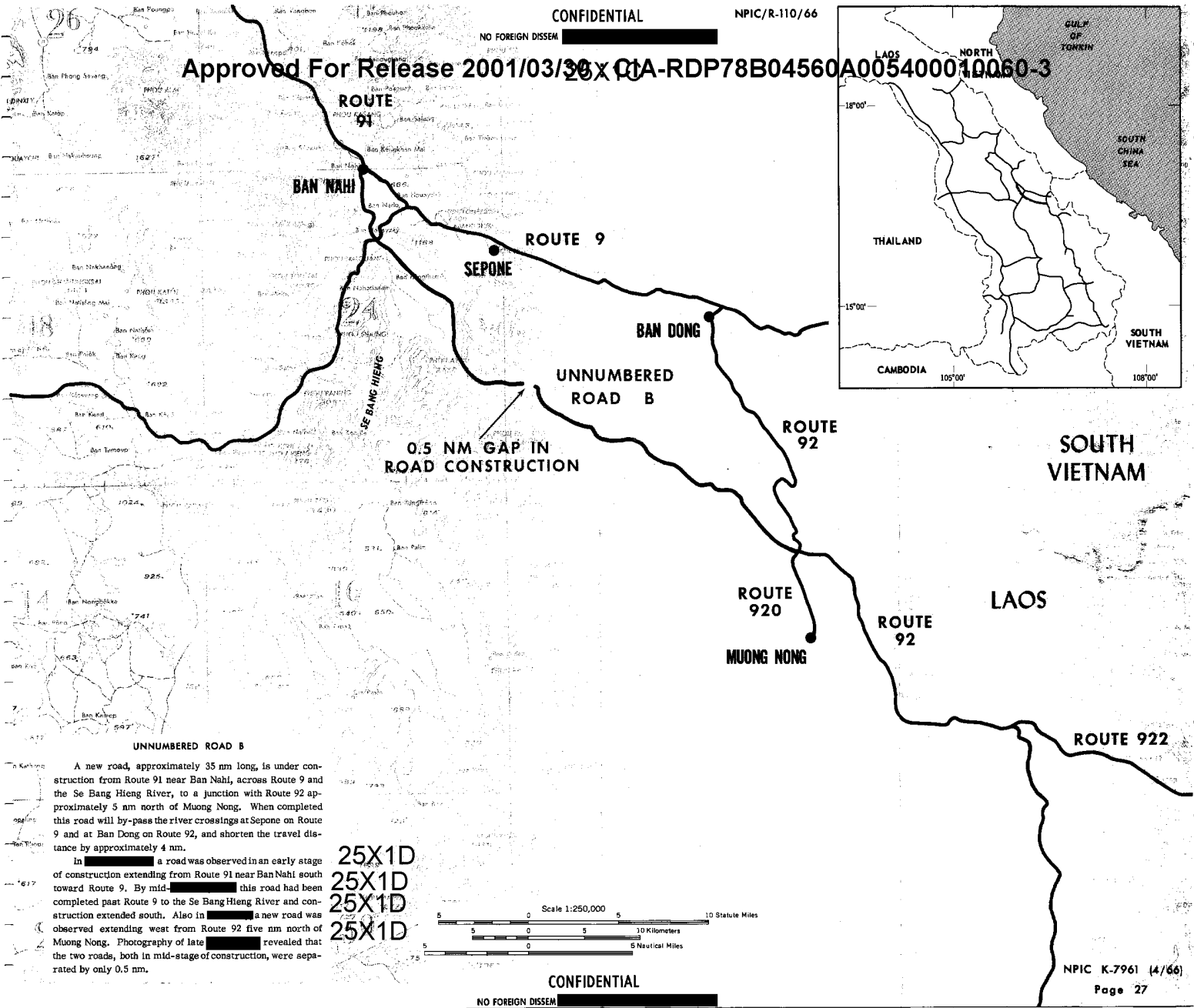
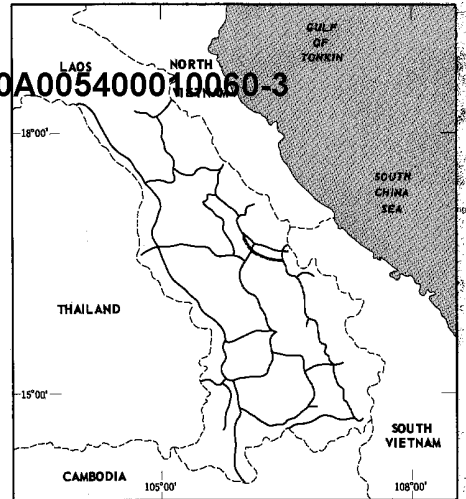


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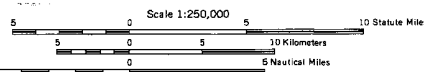


UNNUMBERED ROAD B

A new road, approximately 35 nm long, is under construction from Route 91 near Ban Nah, across Route 9 and the Se Bang Heng River, to a junction with Route 92 approximately 5 nm north of Muong Nong. When completed this road will bypass the river crossings at Sepone on Route 9 and at Ban Dong on Route 92, and shorten the travel distance by approximately 4 nm.

In [redacted] a road was observed in an early stage of construction extending from Route 91 near Ban Nah south toward Route 9. By mid-[redacted] this road had been completed past Route 9 to the Se Bang Heng River and construction extended south. Also in [redacted] a new road was observed extending west from Route 92 five nm north of Muong Nong. Photography of late [redacted] revealed that the two roads, both in mid-stage of construction, were separated by only 0.5 nm.

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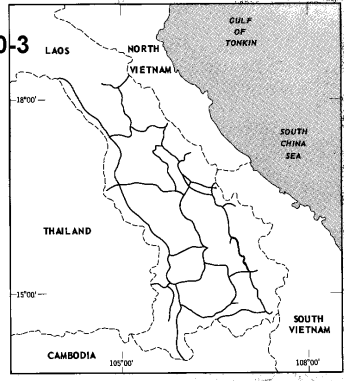
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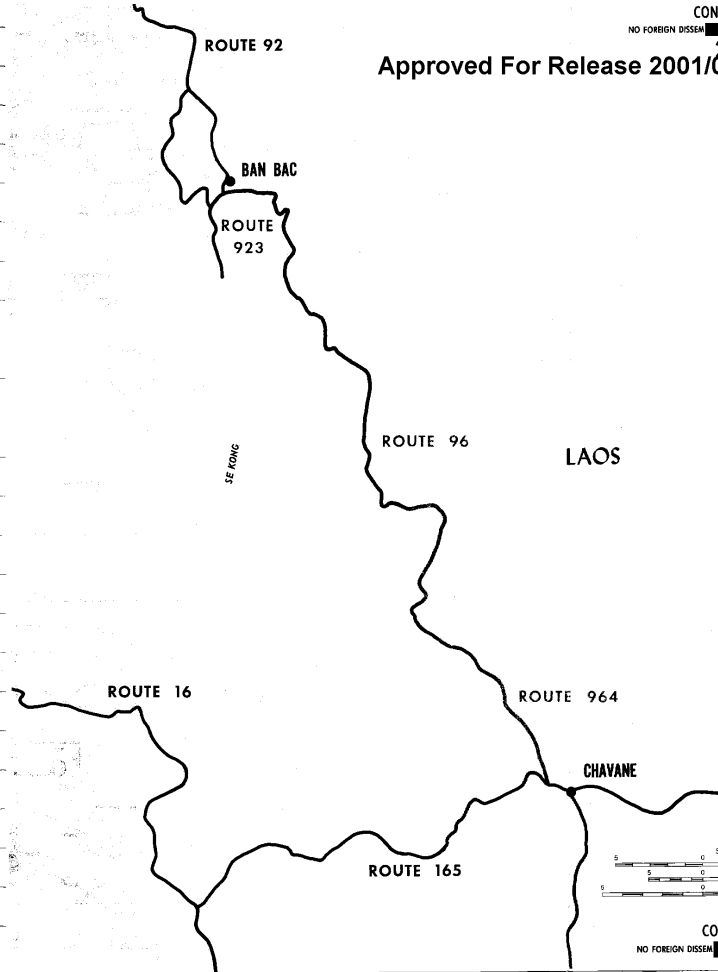
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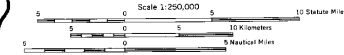
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SOUTH VIETNAM



LAOS



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ROUTE 923/96/964

These three route designators refer to one continuous road which extends from the south bank of the Se Kong River in the vicinity of Ban Bac generally south-southeast for 44 km to Route 165, just northwest of Chavane.

First observed under construction in [redacted] of that year. The road was probably completed in [redacted] of that year. The road crosses rugged terrain as it extends south, perpendicular to the Se Kong drainage system, utilizing switchbacks to cross the ridgelines and fords to cross streams and rivers. This route probably contains more vulnerable road sections than any other route in the Panhandle. The completion of Route 923/96/964 opened the Chavane area to vehicular traffic for the first time since the advent of PL/NVA control in southern Laos. This route could probably at least partially replace the water-borne infiltration on the Se Kong south of Ban Bac.

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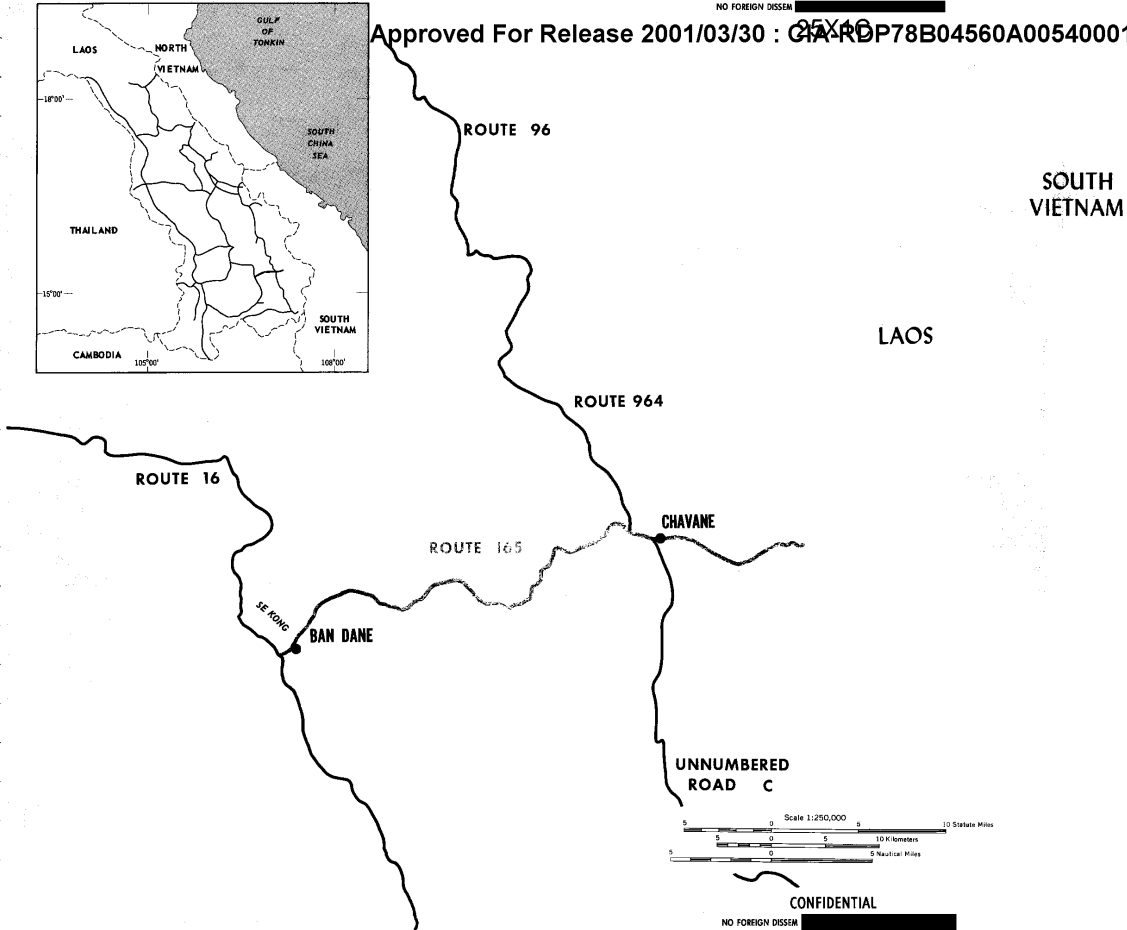
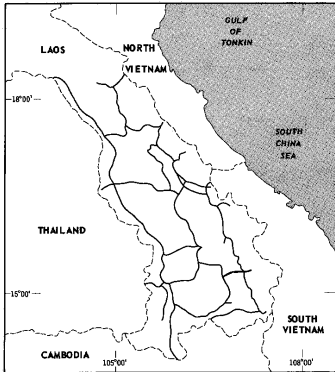
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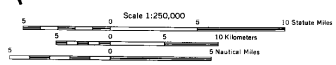


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ROUTE 165

This road extends from a junction with Route 16 near Ban Dane, Laos, across the Se Kong River, east through Chavane, to a point no more than 25 mm west of the South Vietnam border, where it gradually deteriorates into a series of trails incapable of supporting vehicular traffic.

The western portion of Route 165 between Route 16 and a point just northwest of Chavane has deteriorated through a lack of maintenance and use and appears unserviceable. No vehicles or evidence of vehicular activity has been observed along this portion of the route on photography from [redacted] or before as recently as [redacted]. The road and trail system east of Chavane, however, was kept in serviceable condition by continual non-vehicular use; and in [redacted] with the extension of Route 923/96/964 to a junction with Route 165 just northwest of Chavane, vehicle tracks were observed in this area for the first time. By [redacted] vehicle tracks were observed on this portion of the road from Chavane to a point at least 8 mm east, and to within 25 mm of the South Vietnam border. This road could, with relative ease, be extended further to the east by utilizing and improving the existing trail network. However, this network deteriorates and the terrain becomes more adverse as it approaches the border, necessitating actual construction for any road extension.



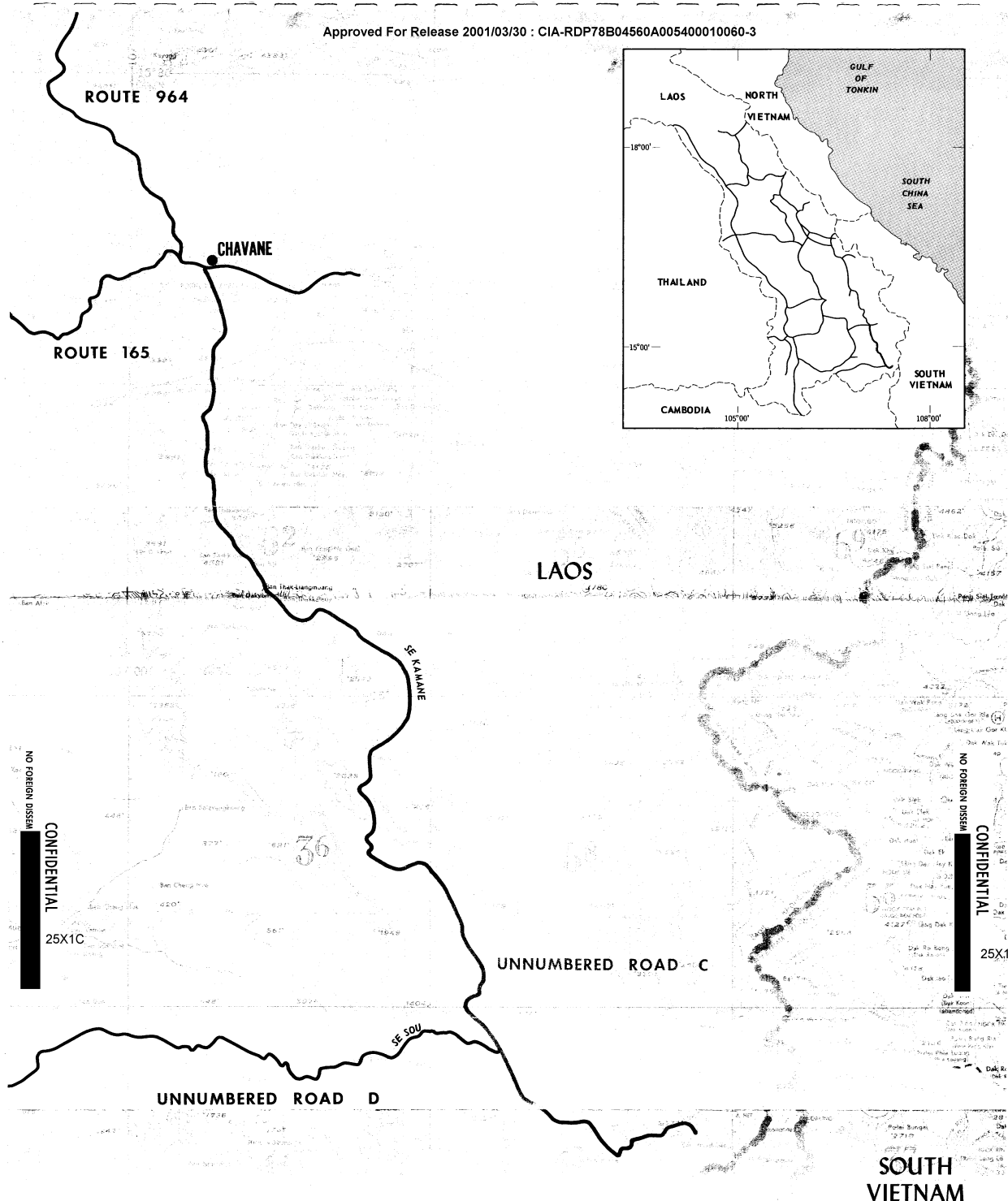
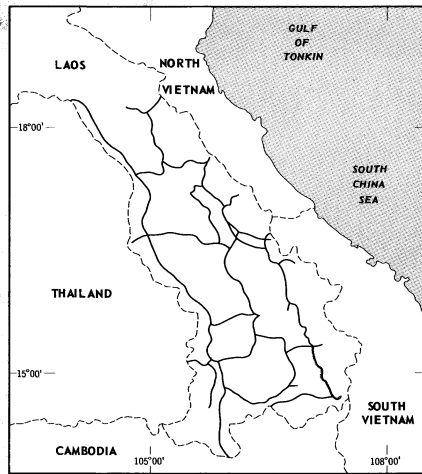
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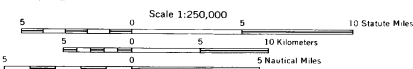
CAMBODIA

UNNUMBERED ROAD C

This route extends from the western end of Chavane Airfield, at a junction with Route 165, generally south-south-east for 63 nm, to within 1.5 nm of the Cambodia border in the Laos/Cambodia/South Vietnam border area.

This road was first observed in [redacted] and at that time consisted of trail construction and improvement. 25X1D
 By [redacted] construction had progressed south to the Se Kamane River. Photography of [redacted] revealed that the road extended as far south as the Se Sou River, with additional construction activity observed further southeast. 25X1D
 Photography of [redacted] revealed that the road had progressed to a terminus 1.5 nm north of the Cambodia border. As of late [redacted] no further clearing operations have been observed. 25X1D

This road is the southernmost part of the motorable road network in the southeast corner of the Laotian Panhandle; and it terminates near an area in Cambodia where extensive suspect insurgent activity has been observed.



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ATTOPEU

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UNNUMBERED ROAD C

UNNUMBERED ROAD D

LAOS

CAMBODIA

SOUTH VIETNAM

BAN SAN KEO

UNNUMBERED ROAD D

This 103-nm road, sometimes referred to as the "Sihanouk Trail," links Unnumbered Road C in Laos, approximately 13 nm from its southern terminus, with the road network and the navigable Tonle Kong River (that part of the Se Kong which flows through Cambodia) in northern Cambodia. Approximately 59 nm of this road are in Laos.

Photography of late [redacted] revealed intermittent road construction from the Siem Pang area, on Cambodia Route 15, north along the east bank of the Tonle Kong River, to Ban San Keo Airfield. By the end of [redacted] this portion of the road had been extended only a short distance east of the airfield. However, another portion of the road was being constructed at this time; it extended west from a junction with Unnumbered Road C in Laos, and had reached a point 9 nm southeast of Attopeu and 37 nm east of Ban San Keo Airfield.

In mid- [redacted] these two segments had been connected and vehicle tracks along the entire alignment confirmed that the road was being used. The road traverses gentle terrain presenting no particular construction problems. Fords are utilized at most of the stream crossings.

Considerable evidence exists (i.e., photographic proof of suspect supply depots, water-borne possible transshipment points, a transloading area, and motorized river craft larger than those native to the area) that the Se Kong/Tonle Kong River in the area of Unnumbered Road D is, and has been used as, an active supply route between Laos and Cambodia. Therefore, the addition of a new motorable road in the area of this activity greatly improves an already extensive logistics net.

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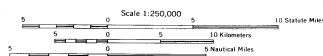
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TONLE KONG

SIEM PANG

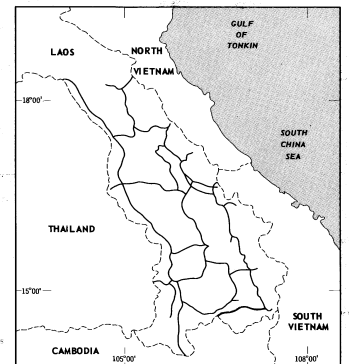
ROUTE 15



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CONCLUSION

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Prior to [REDACTED] when the PL/NVA initiated a program of extensive road construction, the road net in the Laotian Panhandle available to the communist forces consisted of approximately 350 nm of motorable roads (Routes 8, 81, 12, 23, and 9). Since that time PL/NVA forces have been involved in three different types of road construction: the southern extension of the road net, the construction of new roads within the existing road net, and the construction of by-passes and alternate roads in order to maintain serviceability of the through routes.

Approximately 300 nm of new roads (Routes 92, 922, 923, 96, 964, Unnumbered Roads C and D) were built by the PL/NVA in order to extend their road net into southern Laos and the northern Cambodia border area. This was the first phase of construction, and represents the major portion of construction activity in the Panhandle.

Four routes (Routes 911, 91, Unnumbered Roads A and B) have been or are being constructed in an attempt to improve the existing road net. These roads, which will represent approximately 140 nm of new road when completed, increase the capacity of the road net, shorten travel distance, and provide alternate routes in the event that air strikes or inclement weather render a portion of the road net unserviceable.

The third type of road construction--that of constructing by-passes and short alternate roads around interdicted road segments and road segments of particular vulnerability or importance--is found in numerous places throughout the Panhandle. The Route 12/23 by-pass roads, Alternate Route 92, and the multiple river crossings at Ban Pak Pha Nang on Route 23, at Sepone on Route 9, and at Ban Dong on Route 92 are primary examples of this type of construction.

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By the end of [REDACTED], the communist forces possessed at least 790 nm of motorable roads in the Laotian Panhandle--an increase of 440 nm since their program of road construction/improvement had begun a year before.

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REFERENCES

25X1D

This report is based on photography from overflights between primarily [redacted] and [redacted] missions.
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MAPS OR CHARTS

- AMS. Series JOG(A) 1501, Sheets NE 48-6, 11, 12, 15, and 16, 1st ed, Nov 65, scale 1:250,000 (UNCLASSIFIED)
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- AMS. Series JOG(A) 1501, Sheet NE 48-7, 1st ed, Dec 65, scale 1:250,000 (UNCLASSIFIED)

DOCUMENTS

WID No. 50-65, Laos Route Designations, Dec 65 (UNCLASSIFIED)

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