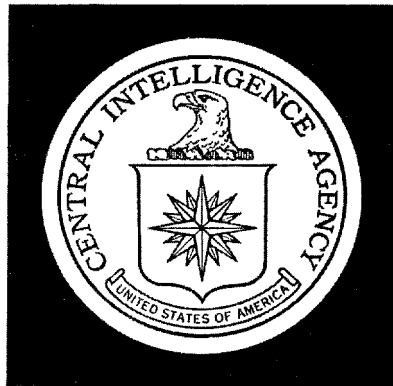


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

Cambodia's Boundary Problems

State Department review completed

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CIA/BGI GM 68-2
27 February 1968

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence

27 February 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Cambodia's Boundary Problems

Summary

The areas in dispute between Cambodia and its neighbors are small, sparsely populated, and -- with the possible exception of certain islands in the Gulf of Siam -- of little intrinsic value. Sihanouk's preoccupation with boundary problems, including his current drive to gain recognition of Cambodia's frontiers by the major powers, reflects his broader interest in safeguarding the existence of the Cambodian nation against what he sees as the continuing threat of Thai and Vietnamese expansionism. Settlement of Cambodia's border claims would probably be relatively uncomplicated from a legal and cartographic standpoint, but the deep-seated animosities among the nations involved will continue to make such a settlement difficult to achieve.

Note: This memorandum was produced by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Basic and Geographic Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence and the Office of National Estimates.

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Sihanouk and the Boundary Issue

1. To Prince Sihanouk and other Cambodians, the salient feature of the modern history of the Indochina area has been the unrelenting pressure exerted on Cambodia's territory by the more aggressive Thai and Vietnamese. In the Cambodian view, the French protectorate established in 1864 averted the threatened extinction of the Khmer (Cambodian) nation by these neighbors, and the departure of the French in 1953 placed it in jeopardy once again. Since independence, therefore, the primary goal of Cambodian foreign policy has been to ensure national survival in the face of anticipated encroachments by the Thai and Vietnamese. Militarily weak, compared to these neighbors, and so far unable (for various reasons) to secure boundary treaties or agreements with them, Cambodia has come to rely on diplomatic maneuver among the great powers to safeguard its territory. In particular, Sihanouk has made repeated efforts to obtain international recognition of Cambodia's existing boundaries. Indeed, in July 1967, Sihanouk demanded such recognition as the price for continued normal diplomatic relations with his government.

2. Most countries represented in Phnom Penh have complied with Sihanouk's demand and offered formal recognition of Cambodia's territorial integrity "within its present frontiers." A number of countries have substituted formal recognition of the "inviolability" of Cambodia's frontiers, but Sihanouk has not fully accepted this formulation. The United States, which has had no diplomatic relations with Cambodia since May 1965, has not provided a formal declaration. However, the joint communique released at the conclusion of the January 1968 US mission to Phnom Penh noted that Ambassador Bowles had "reviewed American assurances of respect for Cambodian . . . territorial integrity," and "emphasized that the United States of America has no desire or intention to violate Cambodian territory." For his part, Sihanouk stressed a desire to achieve US recognition of and respect for Cambodia's "present frontiers."

3. Any US move to meet Sihanouk's demands on the border issue is complicated by numerous political considerations, particularly the possibility of repercussions in Bangkok and Saigon. The issue is further complicated by the existence of conflicting national views on the precise location of the Cambodia-South Vietnam border. And there are some persistent, though much less acute, problems regarding the permanency of Cambodia's borders with Laos and Thailand.

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Cambodia-Laos Border*

4. There is no open dispute between the governments of Cambodia and Laos concerning the alignment of their common boundary. In October 1964, the two parties exchanged aides memoire on the subject. In return for Sihanouk's acceptance of the legitimacy of the Souvanna Phouma regime and expressions of respect for the territorial integrity of Laos, Souvanna explicitly denied that Laos had ever made any claims on Cambodian territory.

5. Sihanouk, however, has remained somewhat suspicious that the Lao retain designs on portions of northeastern Cambodia's Stung Treng and Ratanakiri provinces (Orientation Map). These areas, sparsely populated by largely non-Khmer tribal minorities, were once subject to Lao rule. Sihanouk's suspicions are fed by occasional border incidents and by rumors, some leftist inspired, of continuing Lao official interest in pressing border claims against Cambodia. He is also disturbed by reports of Pathet Lao claims to parts of this same area; he may relate these claims to maps produced in North Vietnam that apparently consign portions of Cambodia's northeastern tip to Laos (see Section: Cambodia-South Vietnam Border).

Cambodia-Thailand Border**

6. The border problem is a significant hindrance to the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Cambodia and Thailand.*** Sihanouk apparently insists that any agreement to renew diplomatic relations include statements of recognition of each other's territorial integrity -- in particular, the observance of the boundaries fixed by the Thai-French treaties of 1904 and 1907 and the 1962 Judgment of the

* For detail see: Department of State, International Boundary Study No. 32, "Cambodia-Laos Boundary," 12 June 1964, Unclassified.



** For detail see: Department of State, International Boundary Study No. 40 (Revised), Cambodia-Thailand Boundary, 1 November 1966, Unclassified.

*** Diplomatic relations were broken in 1961; the proximate cause was the Preah Vihear dispute discussed in this paragraph.

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International Court of Justice (which awarded the Preah Vihear Temple site to Cambodia). For its part, the Thai Government, while willing to accept the language of the 1904 and 1907 treaties, rejects the French maps subsequently prepared, particularly those delimiting the northwestern Cambodian border along the watershed of the Dangrek Range. Thai leaders attribute the galling loss of the well-known temple, situated on the edge of the Dangrek escarpment, to the French maps placed in evidence by Cambodia. Following the court's decision, Preah Vihear was evacuated by the Thai, but they chose to maintain a reservation to the decision. In its unproductive negotiations with Cambodia, conducted since mid-1966 through a UN mediator, Thailand apparently holds to the position that the border question should be deferred until diplomatic relations are renewed, after which a Thai-Cambodian commission would demarcate the border in accordance with existing treaties and agreements.

7. Should Thailand's proposal be adopted, boundary adjustments would be very minor, but one would probably involve the politically sensitive Preah Vihear site. Thailand has stated a willingness to accept shared control of the temple in the interest of reaching agreement, and the problem of the rest of the sparsely populated Dangrek boundary zone could be settled with relative ease. Thailand would probably be willing to defer the entire matter indefinitely if Sihanouk relented in his demands for prior recognition of borders. The primary condition for boundary agreement, therefore, is a desire on both sides to improve relations generally. Meanwhile, the boundary issue will contribute to the mutual suspicions and hostilities which characterize relations between the two countries and are exhibited in frequent border incidents, including military and paramilitary clashes along several sectors of their 500-mile boundary.

Cambodia-South Vietnam Border

8. Cambodia's most serious border problem is with South Vietnam. Sihanouk ended formal relations with Saigon in 1963, in part because of a series of border incidents involving alleged incursions by South Vietnamese armed forces. Diplomatic relations with the United States were broken in 1965 following an attack by US planes on a Cambodian border village. In both cases Sihanouk's assessment of political developments in the Indochina area was almost certainly the controlling factor in his decision.

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9. In the absence of any serious negotiations between the two countries on demarcation, Cambodian-South Vietnamese differences regarding the precise location of their boundary came to light in piecemeal and unsatisfactory fashion in the years following the 1954 Geneva settlement. In the early 1960's, however, with increasing US involvement in South Vietnam, the US Army Map Service systematically procured official maps from the governments of Cambodia and South Vietnam. Both governments provided sheets produced during the colonial period by the French Service Géographique de l'Indochine at a scale of 1:100,000 (1 inch equals 1.6 statute miles). In 1964, however, the Cambodian Foreign Minister presented the United States with another series of map sheets, including some older editions, on which the Cambodia-South Vietnam boundary had been altered in several cases. Compared to these maps, those provided by the South Vietnamese were generally more recent and adhered to the French version of the border with little modification.

10. The two sets of maps revealed eight relatively minor differences, including a conflict over certain small islands in the Gulf of Siam.* Since 1966, additional points of boundary disagreement have emerged; some became known as a result of border incidents during Allied military operations, while others were surfaced in the course of further exchanges of mapping information between the United States and the governments of both Cambodia and South Vietnam. Fifteen areas along the Cambodian border with South Vietnam may be in dispute at this time (see Orientation Map and larger scale Area maps).

Areas in Dispute

Area 1: Cambodia-Laos-South Vietnam Trijunction
("The Northeast Salient") (Map 1)

There are a few small sectors of overlapping claims in Area 1. They total approximately 4 square miles of extremely rugged, heavily forested terrain, populated -- if at all -- by migratory tribal peoples. The "dispute" is apparently the result of technical problems in locating the water divide on which the boundary is supposed to be based.

* Detailed results of this comparison and related information are presented in: Department of State, INR Research Memorandum RES-19, Cambodia-Vietnam Boundary, 13 September 1966, Secret/No Foreign Dissem/Controlled Dissem.

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A potentially more serious boundary problem in this general region was raised by the publication in 1964 of North Vietnamese maps showing most of Cambodia's north-east salient divided between Laos and (South) Vietnam. The discrepancy may indicate nothing more than North Vietnamese reliance on outdated French maps, but sustained Viet Cong-North Vietnamese Army use of portions of the area over the past 2 or 3 years raises other possibilities. Though Cambodia claims jurisdiction over the entire area in controversy, its official presence is virtually nonexistent. There is no indication that Hanoi's cartographic claims in this region have been the subject of any specific complaint by Sihanouk. Saigon's view of the problem is unknown.

Area 2: Route 19 Crossing (Map 2)

In mid-1967, in connection with its latest demand for border recognition, Cambodia informally provided information on its territorial claims on the South Vietnamese border. The Cambodians repeated some earlier claims, dropped or omitted others, and added some new ones. Among the last was an area of 4 or 5 square miles in the vicinity of Route 19 west of Duc Co -- the Plei M'lou area. The claim appears to be unfounded; it contradicts the Cambodian maps provided to the United States in 1964 and all other reliable map sources. It should be noted, however, that the Route 19 crossing point was the scene of frequent moving of boundary pillars by both sides during the late 1950's; the area is evidently of some interest to Phnom Penh and Saigon.

Area 3: The Ia Drang Crossing (Map 2)

The frontier zone in this sector is not well known, and the boundaries drafted on French and Cambodian maps may be in error. The problem is essentially one of judgment; there is, in effect, no legal basis for the boundary in this Area. The sector in possible dispute is only about 2 square miles, but it may be of some use to Viet Cong-North Vietnamese Army units in the upper Ia Drang valley region of South Vietnam.

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Area 4: Ea Lop-Ea Hleo Confluence (Map 3)

Precise boundaries in the vicinity of the Ea Lop-Ea Hleo confluence are unknown, and maps differ slightly. Involved is a strip no more than a half mile in width, extending from near the confluence of the Ea Lop and Ea Hleo southward for about 25 miles to the Srepok River. The problem came up on the 1967 list; Cambodia apparently decided to move the previously accepted boundary eastward to the confluence site.

Area 5: The Srepok Crossing (Map 3)

The problem in this Area is mainly one of differing cartographic interpretations of vague French instructions regarding the use of the watershed as a boundary. Approximately 3 square miles, probably uninhabited, are involved.

Area 6: Cambodia - Annam - Cochinchina Trijunction ("The Three Frontiers") (Maps 4 and 4A)

This is one of the few disputed areas of consequence along the Cambodia-South Vietnam border. About 21 square miles are involved, including several villages. In this case, Cambodian maps have long differed from other authoritative sources.

Area 7: Northeast of Bu Dop (Map 4)

In 1964, Cambodian maps depicted a very small, heavily forested, and sparsely populated zone east of the upper Dak Huyt as part of Cambodia. The claim was dropped or omitted in the 1967 brief and probably can be ignored.

Area 8: North of Loc Ninh (Map 5)

Although there is no open dispute in this Area, there are indications that the Cambodians may some day press for minor boundary revisions in the Route 13 sector.

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Areas 9 and 10: Tay Ninh Region (Maps 6 and 6A)

Among Cambodia's 1967 claims are some along the border of South Vietnam's Tay Ninh Province. This has been a sensitive border in recent years because of major military operations in the Communists' War Zone C complex. Many complaints by Sihanouk have alleged Allied border violations, including a few very recently. These new border claims may have been put forward in the hope of restraining Allied activity in this sector of the border.

There is no known legal or cartographic basis for the 1967 Cambodian claim to the relatively large area (Area 9) south of Mimot, Cambodia, and the claim is strongly opposed by Saigon. The villagers are predominantly ethnic Cambodians, but ethnic lines have never been closely followed in establishing Cambodia's boundaries with its neighbors.

Cambodia's 1967 claims in the Tay Ninh region also include "numerous other small but important areas such as Thlok Trach" (Area 10). This sort of language probably indicates that Cambodia is reserving its position on the alignment of the frontier in this sector. The Thlok Trach area is in South Vietnam according to existing maps, but the area road pattern clearly links it to Cambodia and it has apparently been under Cambodian administration. The same situation may prevail in other nearby villages.

Areas 11 and 12: The Mekong-Bassac Neck (Map 7)

The precise alignment of the boundary in these poorly drained areas between the Mekong and Bassac rivers is uncertain. Cambodia has claimed a narrow and sparsely settled strip of land, 5 kilometers (about 3 miles) in length (Area 12).

East of the Mekong the Cambodians in 1967 claimed a village or two located almost certainly in South Vietnam (Area 11).

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Area 13: Song Chau Doc Waterway (Map 7)

The Cambodians in 1967 presented claims to a thin slice of swampland west of the Bassac. The claim of a straight-line frontier in the area contradicts existing boundary pillars and is probably invalid.

Area 14: Kinh Vinh Te Border (Map 7)

This problem apparently stems from incorrect drafting by US mapmakers. Cambodia claims that the long stretch of border north of the Kinh Vinh Te waterway should be moved 250 meters (some 820 feet) farther south. The United States accepts this correction, and Saigon probably does so too.

Area 15: Islands in the Gulf of Siam (Map 8)

Sovereignty over certain islands in the Gulf of Siam is actively claimed by both Cambodia and South Vietnam. Disagreement over ownership has existed since the early years of French administration. Finally, in 1939, French authorities decreed that the limits of insular administrative responsibilities of Cambodia and the colony of Cochin-China would be defined by a straight line (the "Brevie Line") that extended seaward from the mainland at a bearing of 234° (except in the vicinity of the large island of Phu Quoc where the line looped north to include this area under Cochin-Chinese administration). The decree, however, expressly disavowed any intention of dividing the islands on the basis of sovereignty.

After independence, Cambodia on several occasions expressed a willingness to accept the Brevie Line, the de facto administrative boundary, as the official boundary, but South Vietnam continually rejected its validity and demanded control of all the islands, including two lying off the Cambodian port of Ream. In the late 1950's, the temporary South Vietnamese occupation of certain of these islands lying just north of the Brevie Line further alarmed Cambodia.

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In 1960, official South Vietnamese rejection of the Brevie Line led the Cambodians to withdraw their previous offers of compromise and, in 1964, they submitted maps to the United States claiming not only the islands immediately south of the line, but also the island of Panjang, far to the southwest. In mid-1967, the Cambodians reaffirmed this claim with the aid of some erroneous mathematical techniques (that is, deliberately or otherwise, they selected the wrong bearing for the Brevie Line). It seems likely that Sihanouk's current claims are nothing more than a gambit and that he would settle quickly for the status quo -- the accepted version of the Brevie Line. He appeared satisfied, for example, with an alleged 1966 denunciation by Viet Cong negotiators of Vietnamese claims to the islands under Cambodian rule. For its part, Saigon has not disavowed Diem's 1960 claim; it may be significant, however, that in December 1966, Saigon accused Cambodia of illegally occupying only the two islands -- Kien Vang and Keo Ngua -- which lie immediately north of the Brevie Line.

Even in total, the disputed Cambodia-South Vietnam land border areas are of little intrinsic value -- strategic or otherwise -- to either of the nations, but the islands off the Cambodian ports of Kep and Ream may be of considerable strategic importance to Cambodia, which fears restriction or denial of its access to the open sea. In the Gulf of Siam area, therefore, the Cambodians are unlikely to give way to Saigon's claims.

Outlook

11. The current drive by Cambodia to define its frontiers and gain official acknowledgment of their validity by the major powers may be the culmination of a 15-year campaign to commit the international community to the broader objective of safeguarding the existence of the Khmer nation. Despite Sihanouk's frequent and vociferous claims to this or that sliver of mountain jungle or delta swampland, his border problem is essentially the establishment of a limit to what he sees as Thai and Vietnamese expansionism and much less one

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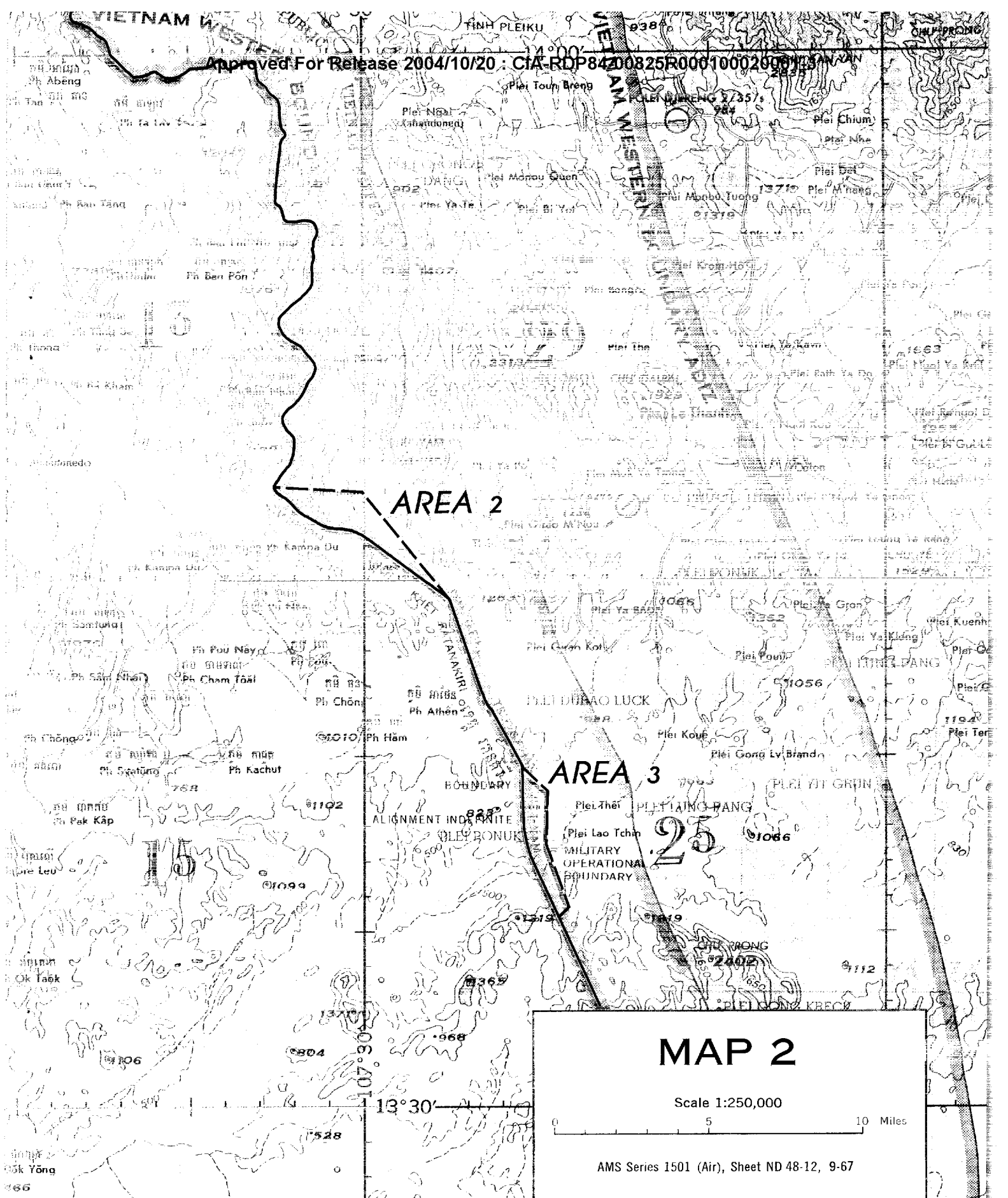
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of rectification and demarcation. Settlement of his border claims probably would be relatively uncomplicated from a legal and cartographic standpoint (though actual demarcation on the ground would encounter great obstacles so long as hostilities persist in South Vietnam). The deep-seated animosities among the parties, however, have prevented and continue to prevent such a settlement. Even if a settlement were possible, it would almost certainly not lead to an end of border incidents and violations, so long as the parties remain basically hostile to one another.

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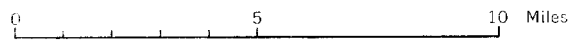
AREA 2

AREA 3

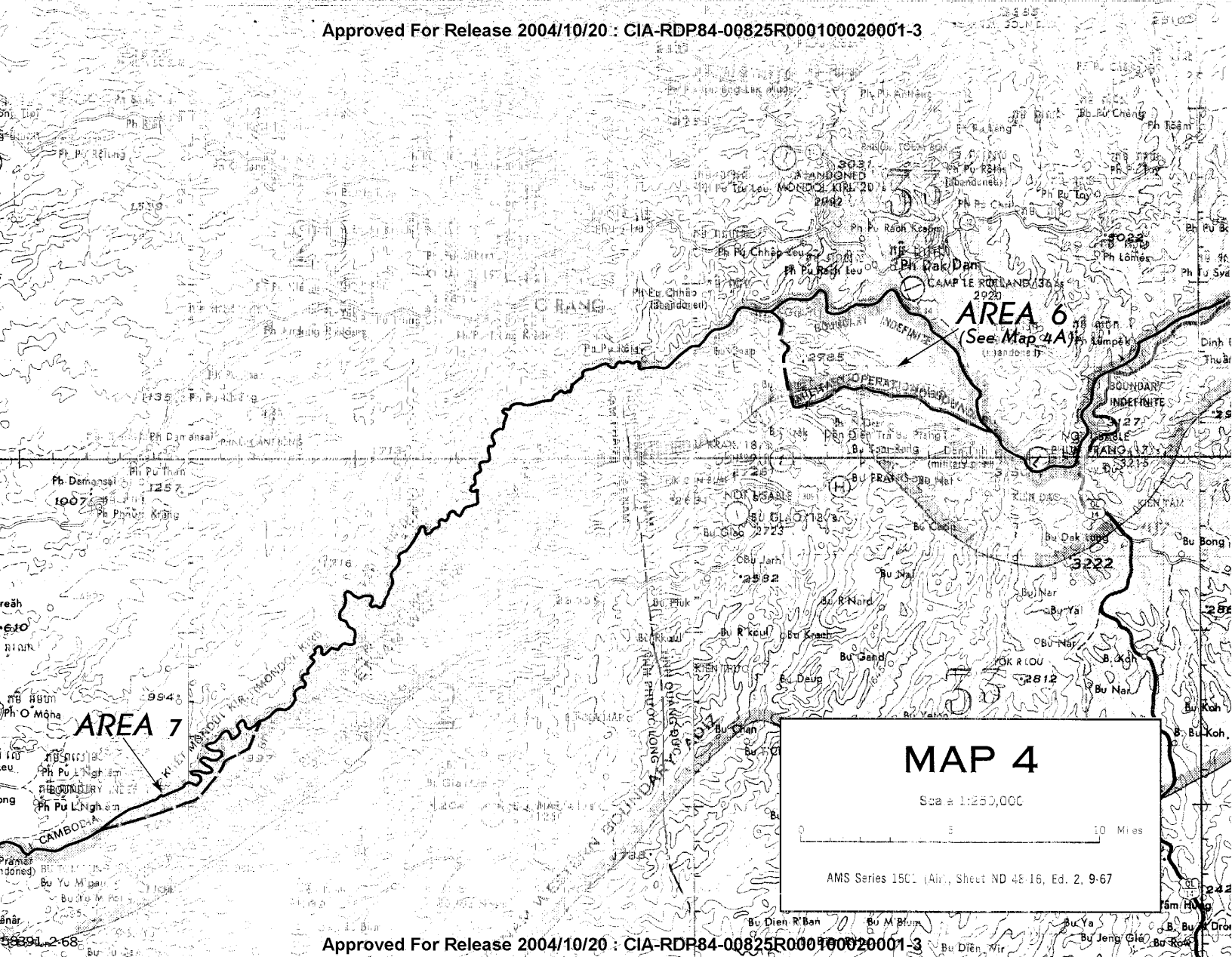
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MAP 2

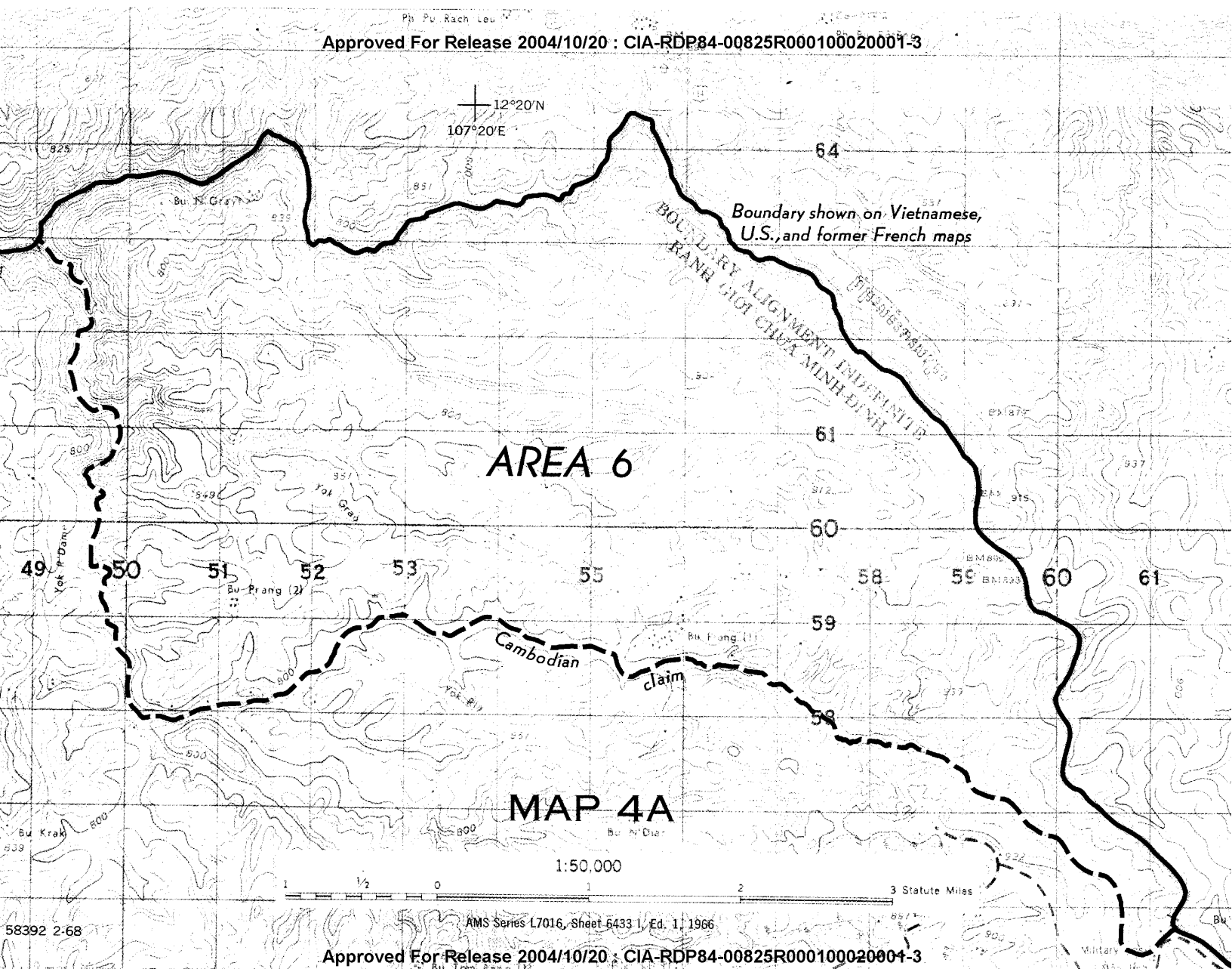
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AMS Series 1501 (Air), Sheet ND 48-12, 9-67



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Ph. P. Rach. Lou.

12°20'N
107°20'E

Boundary shown on Vietnamese,
U.S., and former French maps

AREA 6

BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT INDEFINITE
RANH GIỚI CHƯA MINH ĐỊNH

Cambodian
claim

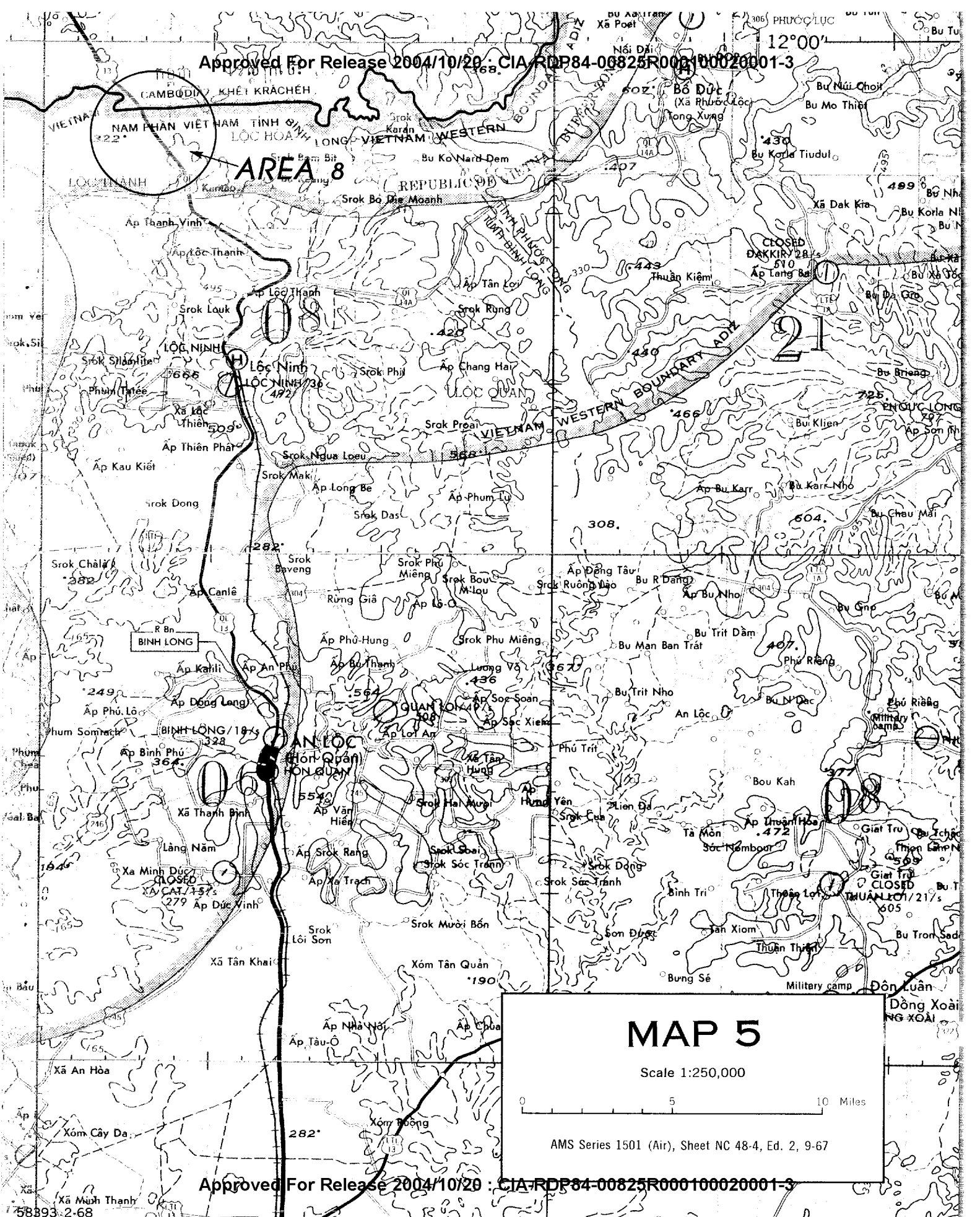
MAP 4A

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1 1/2 0 1 2 3 Statute Miles

AMS Series L7016, Sheet 5433 I, Ed. 1, 1966

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AREA 8

21

MAP 5

Scale 1:250,000



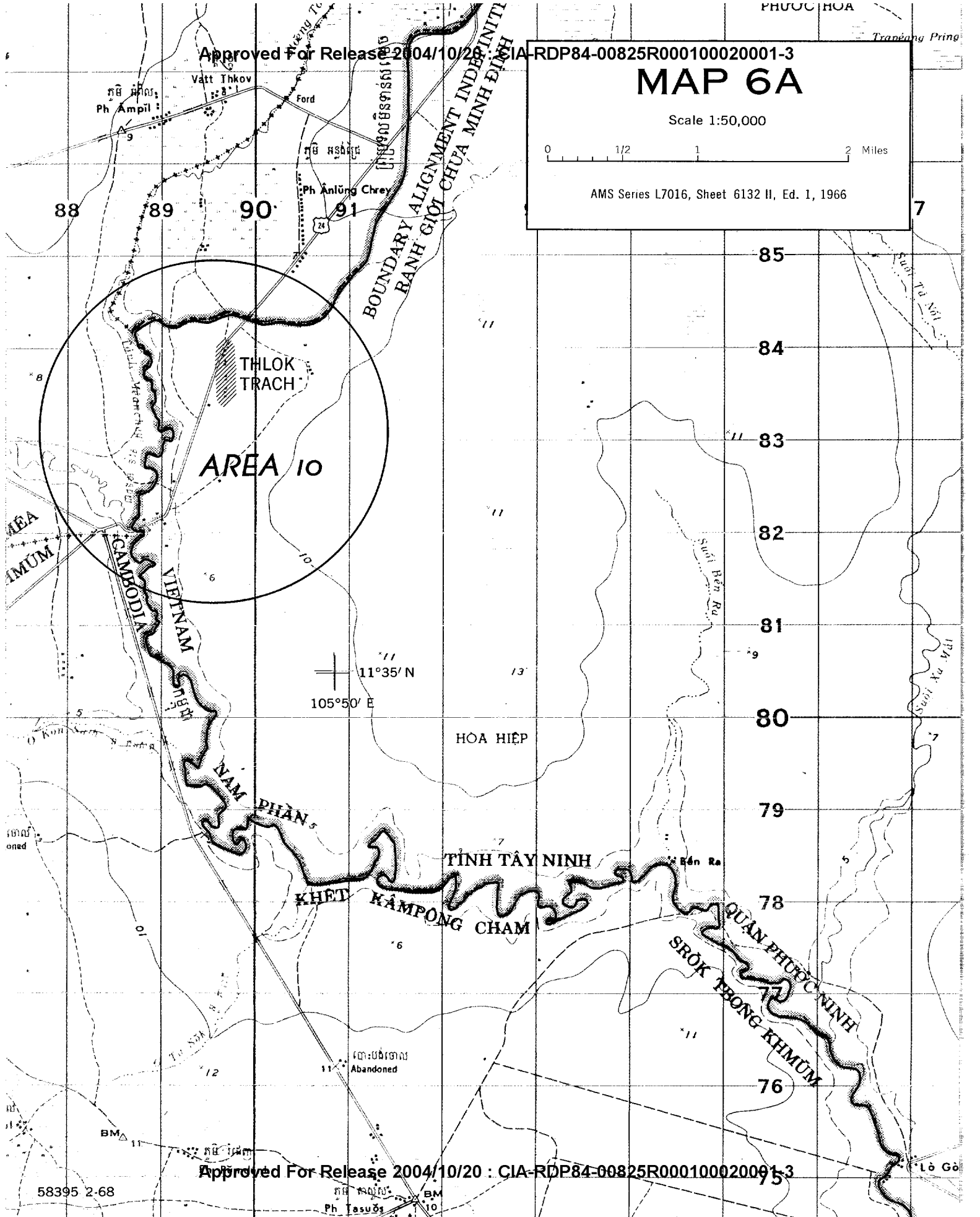
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MAP 6A

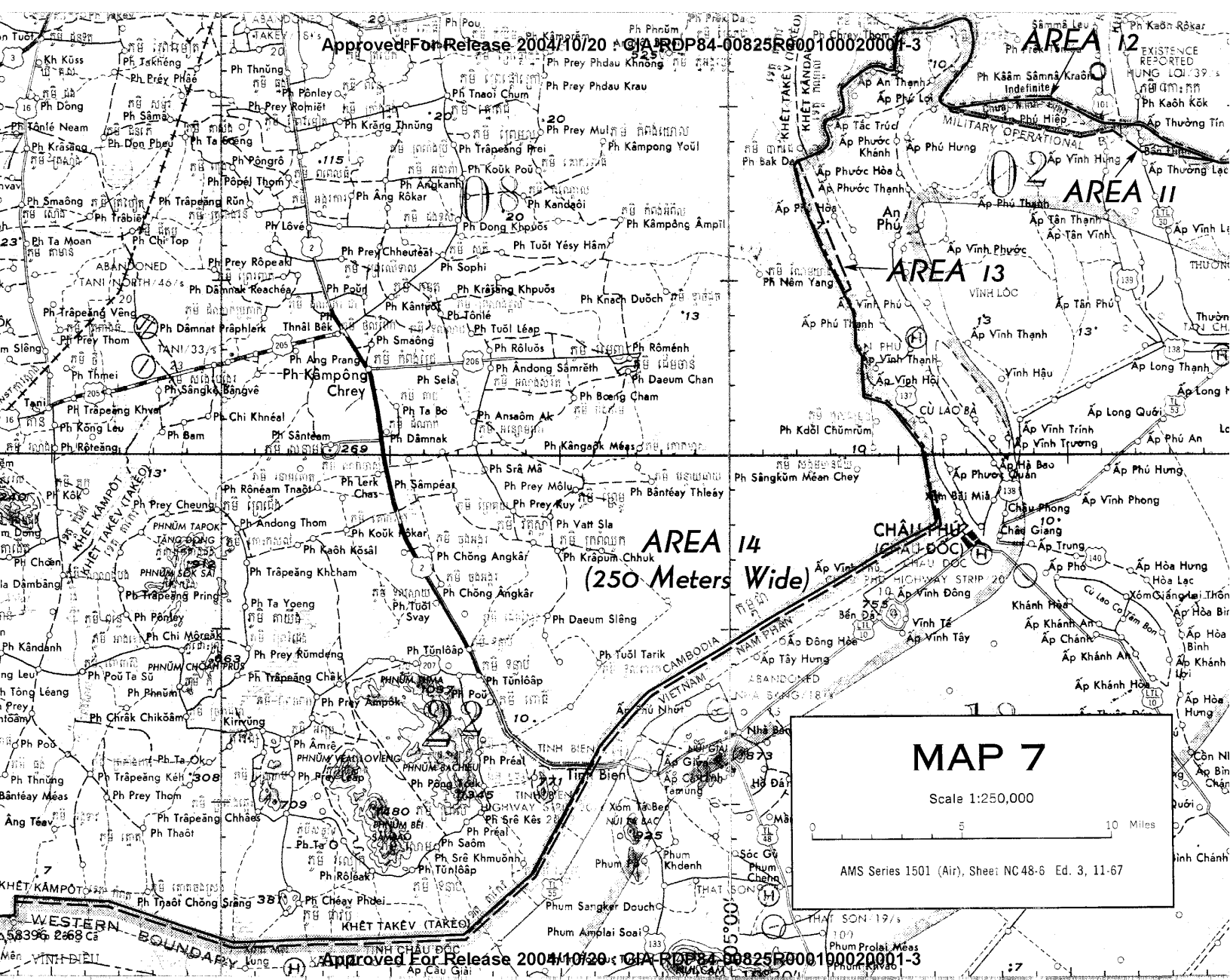
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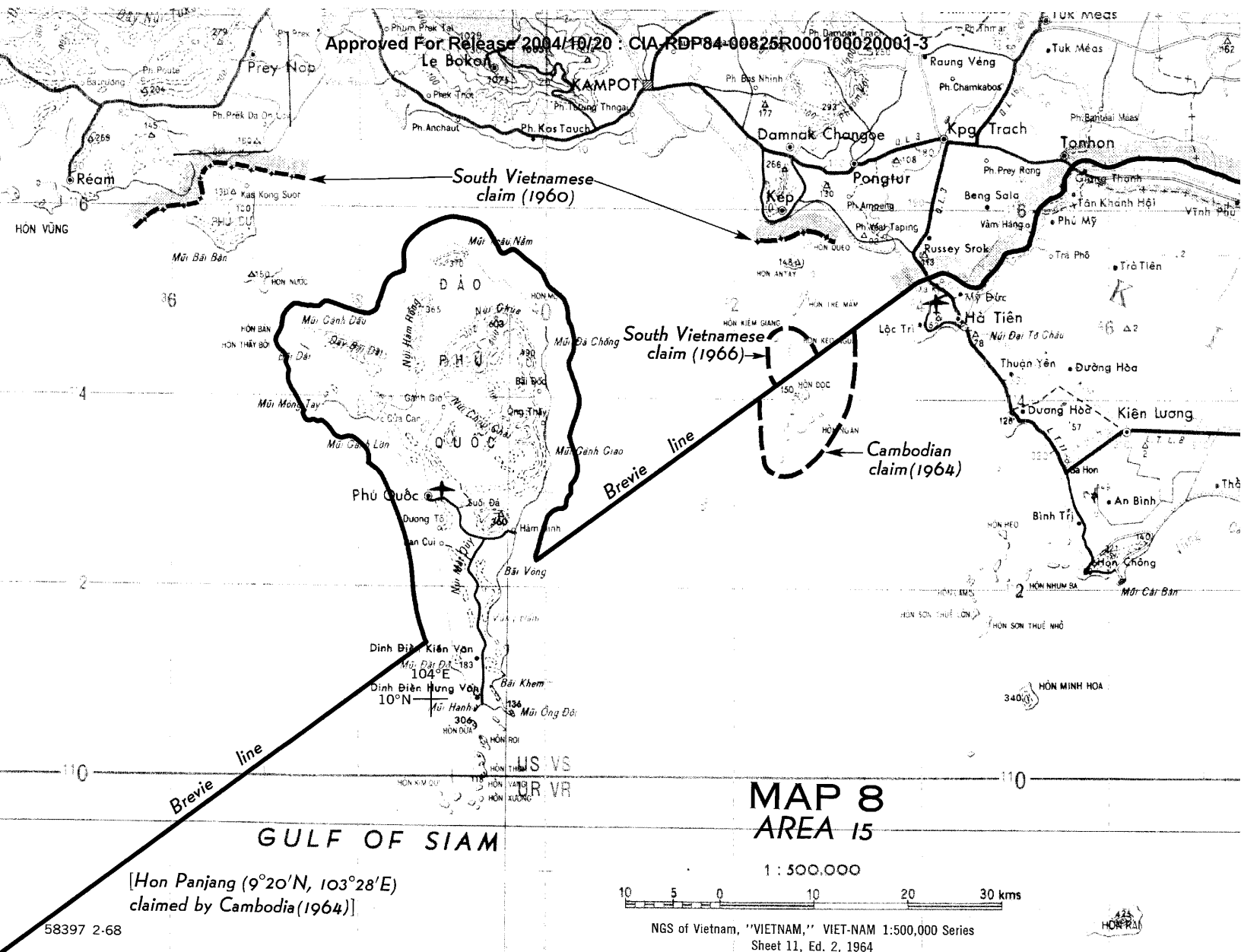


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MAP 7
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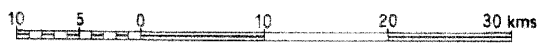


[Hon Panjang (9°20'N, 103°28'E) claimed by Cambodia (1964)]

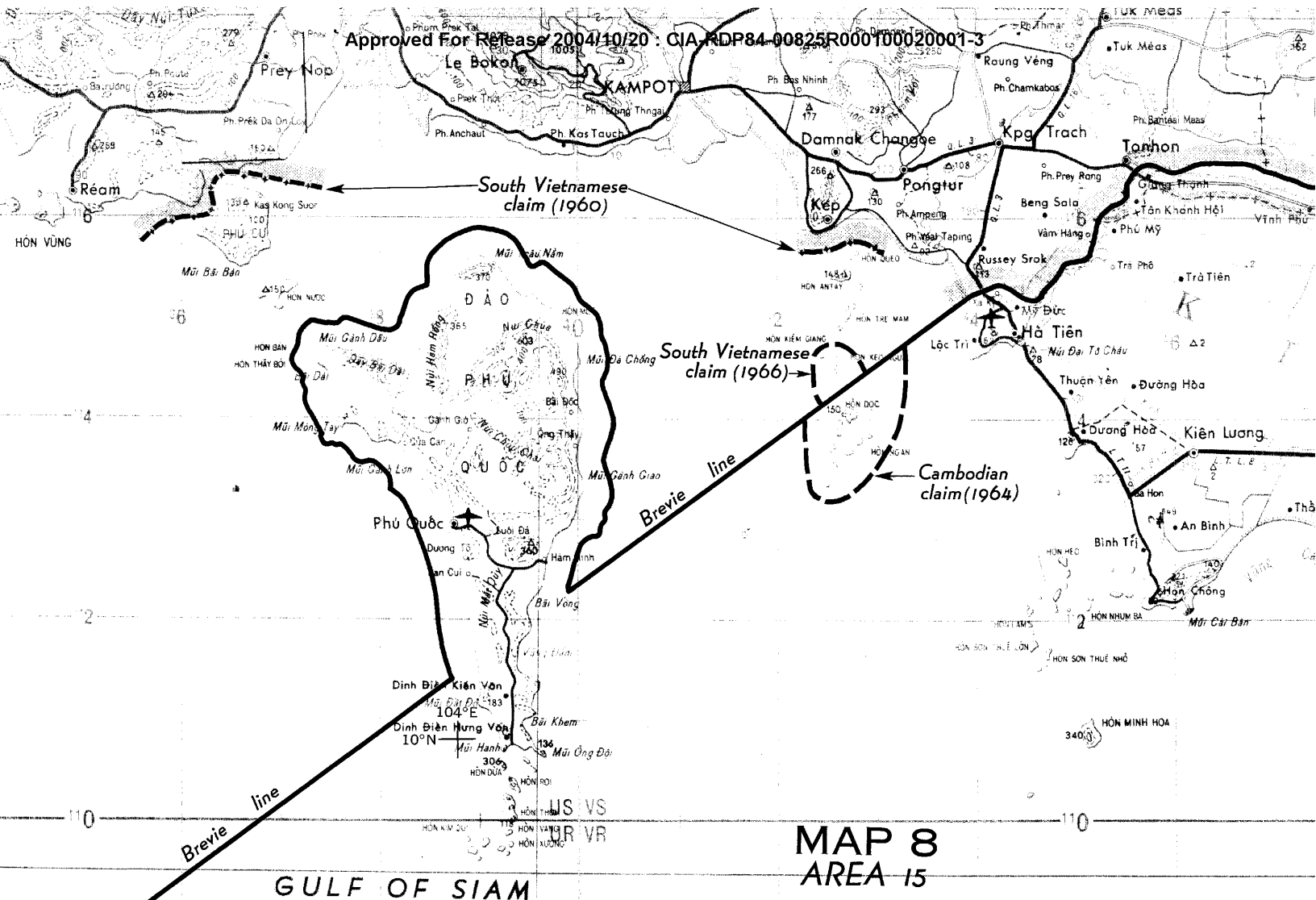
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MAP 8 AREA 15

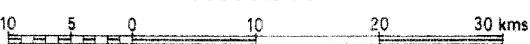
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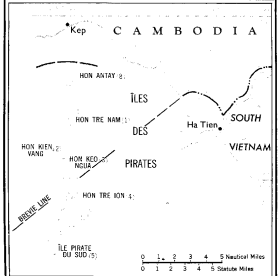
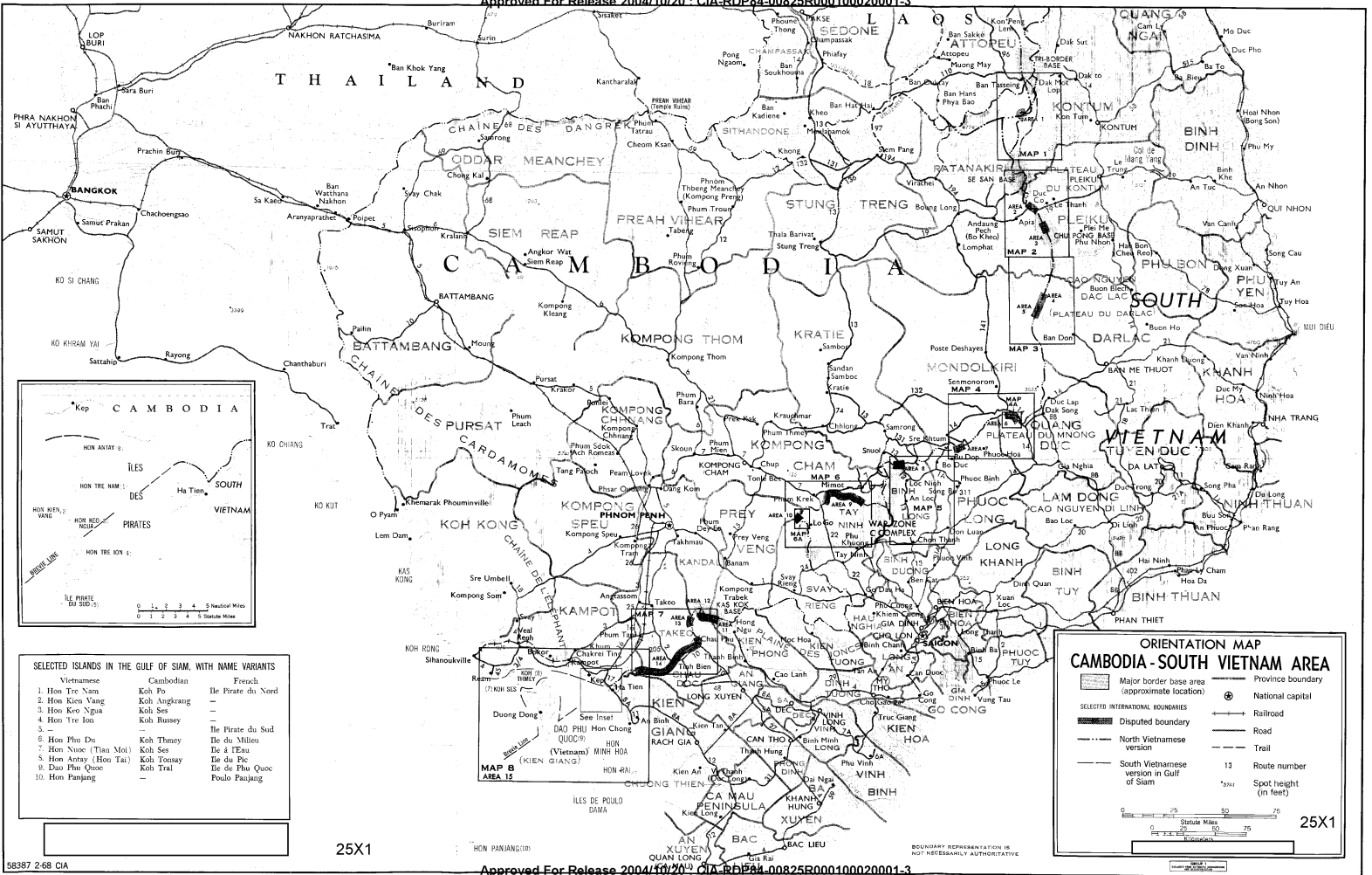
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Sheet 11, Ed. 2, 1964



[Hòn Panjang (9°20'N, 103°28'E)
claimed by Cambodia(1964)]



NGS of Vietnam, "VIETNAM," VIET-NAM 1:500,000 Series
Sheet 11, Ed. 2, 1964



SELECTED ISLANDS IN THE GULF OF SIAM, WITH NAME VARIANTS

Vietnamese	Cambodian	French
1. Hon Tre Nam	Koh Po	Île Pirate du Nord
2. Hon Kien Yang	Koh Angkrang	—
3. Hon Kien Ngua	Koh Ses	—
4. Hon Tre Iou	Koh Russay	—
5. —	—	Île Pirate du Sud
6. Hon Phu Da	Koh Thmey	Île du Milieu
7. Hon Nuoc (Hon Moi)	Koh Ses	Île à l'Eau
8. Hon Aray (Hon Tai)	Koh Torsay	Île du Pic
9. Dao Phu Quoc	Koh Trai	Île de Phu Quoc
10. Hon Panjang	—	Poulo Panjang

ORIENTATION MAP
CAMBODIA - SOUTH VIETNAM AREA

Major border base area (approximate location)

SELECTED INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES

- Disputed boundary
- North Vietnamese version
- South Vietnamese version in Gulf of Siam

Province boundary

National capital

Railroad

Road

Trail

Route number

Spot height (in feet)

Scale: 0 25 50 75 Statute Miles / 0 25 50 75 Nautical Miles

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