

CHAPTER
22

Section 4

GEOGRAPHY APPLICATION: LOCATION

The Ho Chi Minh Trail

Directions: Read the paragraphs below and study the map carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

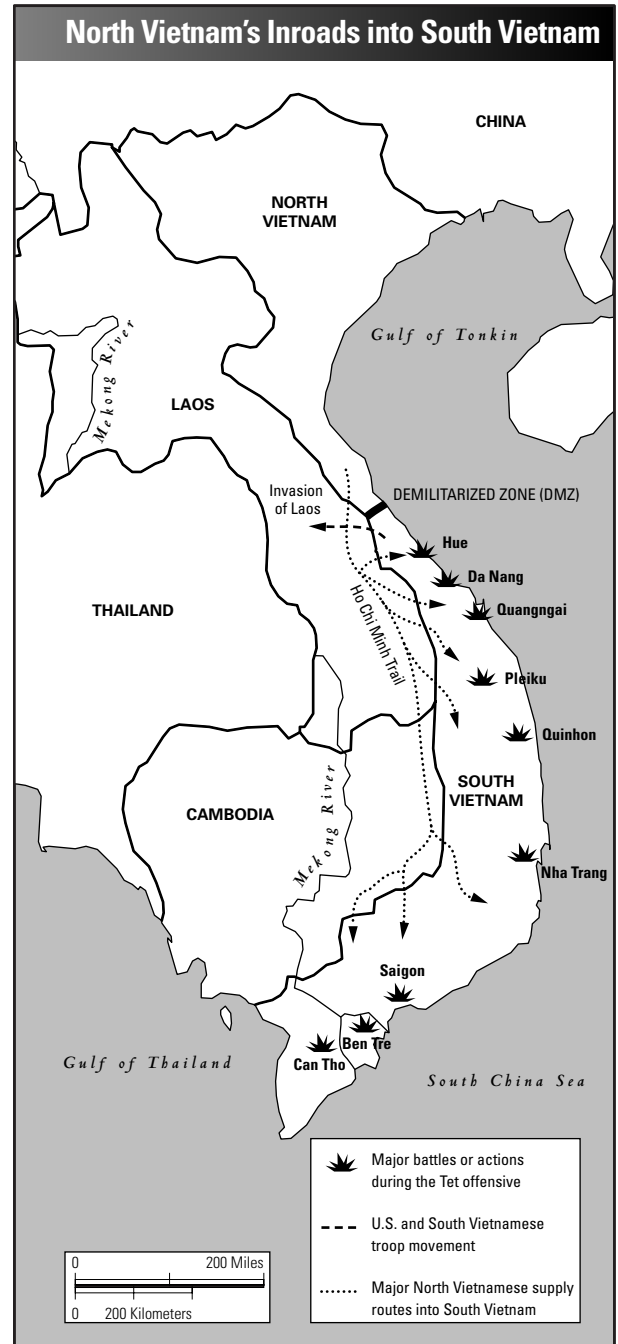
The Ho Chi Minh Trail developed from a network of existing hidden jungle paths. During the 1960s, it became the main route used by North Vietnam to get troops and supplies into South Vietnam in support of the Vietcong's fight against South Vietnamese troops and their U.S. allies. The trail was named for Ho Chi Minh, the leader of North Vietnam at the time. When North Vietnamese soldiers were wounded, they were transported up the trail for treatment.

U.S. and South Vietnamese troops tried repeatedly to cut or destroy this lifeline. They drenched the surrounding jungle with defoliants to kill trees and other vegetation. This effort failed, and North Vietnam continued to use the trail.

The Tet Offensive of early 1968 showed how determined North Vietnam was. The North Vietnamese and the Vietcong launched simultaneous raids on provincial capitals and major cities throughout South Vietnam at the beginning of Tet, the lunar new year celebration. The U.S. Embassy in Saigon was attacked, as were many other supposedly secure sites. The planning and coordination needed to carry out such an action stunned Americans in Vietnam and in the United States. The Tet Offensive, though not a North Vietnamese victory in the sense that it captured territory or inflicted great casualties, still caused many Americans to rethink their nation's involvement in the Vietnam War.

In 1971, South Vietnamese troops invaded Laos in an attempt to cut off the flow of men and supplies along the trail. Despite American air support, the invasion was a disaster, and the South Vietnamese army was defeated by North Vietnamese forces.

The Ho Chi Minh Trail, along which more than 20,000 troops a month could be moved by 1967, was the key to keeping North Vietnam in the war until the United States tired of battle and controversy and pulled out.



Interpreting Text and Visuals

1. Describe the path of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. _____

2. What was the purpose of the Ho Chi Minh Trail? _____

3. According to the map, about how many miles long was the Ho Chi Minh Trail? _____

4. Describe the 1971 operation directed at interrupting the Ho Chi Minh Trail. _____

5. What might have been the outcome of a successful invasion of Laos in 1971? _____

6. Reread the text and then look at the map for the northernmost and southern-
most points of attack during the Tet Offensive. What part do you think the Ho Chi
Minh Trail played in the attacks? _____

