

## Battle of Huế Timeline

- 28 Jan:** NVA and VC forces begin final move into position.  
ARVN forces begin Tet New Year leave.
- 29 Jan:** Main units of NVA /VC reach Tả Trạch River six miles from Hue.  
US aircraft spot movement; some artillery shelling been delaying movement.  
US/ARVN forces are not concerned; no ground units are sent to investigate.  
First in many intelligence failures.
- 30 Jan:** NVA targeted major U.S. Installations, major population centers, and nearly every provincial city.  
Premature Tet Offensive attacks at Nha Trang and Qui Nhon on the morning confuse Allied command. Leaves not cancelled by ARVN.  
15-18 NVA Bns in position near Huế City.  
By evening Allied patrol spot NVA movement south of Rt. 1; greatly underestimate enemy forces.  
Rain and low cloud begin to sock in the region. Weather will persist until 2 Feb.
- 31 Jan:** 0230 NVA launch coordinated attack on Citadel, Palace and Mang Ca (ARVN).  
Only General Truong's HQ at Mang Ca (Citadel) and MACV Compound (southern city) not overrun.  
Truong calls for reinforcements, but they cannot push through. Most are poorly armed with M1s and little ammo.  
Gen. LaHue "Initial deployment of forces was made with limited information."  
0630 1/1 Marines move north from Phu Bai. Canley and Gonzalez lead defense of the convoy. They arrive at 1515.  
Company A, 1st Bn, 1st Marines and Company G, 2d Bn, 5th Marines fight their way to MACV Compound under Capt. Christmas.  
0700 U.S. Army helicopter was shot down.  
1630 1/1 costly assault across Nguyen Hoang Bridge; tanks too heavy.  
MACV Microwave/Tropo communications facility isolated.  
2000 secure position around MACV Compound.  
2300 229th Air Cav. Battalion attacked at Camp Evans.  
Nearly 3000 South Vietnamese citizens and foreigners executed this day alone.  
Gen. LaHue "Initial deployment of forces was made with limited information."

- 1 Feb:** Operation Huế City begins  
 0700 1/1 launches two-company attack towards provincial building and prison  
 0900 Tay Loc Airfield recaptured by 1st ARVN Division  
 22:15 1st Cav arrive west of Huế.
- 2 Feb:** 0200 NVA Sappers destroy Bach Ho (railroad) and the Trường Tiền bridges, fail to destroy canal bridges.  
 0600 3d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division attacks southeast towards Hue to cut off enemy supply lines and escape routes, but the attack is badly mauled.  
 0900 Marines in the southern city get reinforced and reach the Hue University Campus. Move toward the Provincial Hdq and Thua Thien Prison.  
 1100 2/5 Marines crossed the An Cuu Bridge in an armed convoy (2 M50 Ontos). Begin street-by-street fighting.  
 1400 Col. Ernie Cheatham sends wall busting equipment north from Phu Bai.
- 3-4 Feb:** Marines consolidate command of battalions 1/1 and 2/5 under Colonel Hughes and continue to advance into the southern city  
 After 5 or 6 assaults on the post office and treasury building, Marines forced to fall back to university  
 All supporting arms restrictions removed, but weather prevents air support.
- 5-7 Feb:** NVA use strongpoints and defend every other street  
 2d Bn's AO eleven block wide and eight to nine blocks deep. Supported by M-48 tanks and M-50 Ontos (armored vehicle equipped with six recoilless rifles) Marines.  
 5 Feb - fight to retake Citadel begins by ARVN.  
 5-7 Feb Stalemate - NVA using hundreds of fortified structures with interconnected defensive lines  
 6 Feb - capture Provincial HQs after a five-hour battle.  
 7 Feb - NVA gets some air supply support.
- 8-10 Feb:** Southern Hue  
 Marines renew their offensive enemy resistance largely evaporates  
 10 Feb - Marines control southern sector of the city  
 Cost of clearing modern city:  
 Marines – 38 dead; 320 wounded  
 NVA – 1000 dead; wounded unknown
- The Citadel  
 10 Feb - After heavy fighting 1st Cavalry units face stalemate outside.  
 10 Feb - Marines improve coordination of support fires.

- 11-14 Feb:** 11 Feb – Companies A, B, and C, 1/5 arrive at Mang Ca Compound  
13 Feb – 1/5 Marines attack and are immediately met with fierce resistance  
14 Feb – renewed attacks stall
- 15-17 Feb:** 15 Feb – 1/5 captures a tower on the Citadel's east wall.  
16 Feb – 1/5 continues to push into Citadel against NVA, better adapted to city fighting than in southern Huế.  
17 Feb – After heavy fighting, a temporary halt to the advance is called.  
16 Feb – The NVA still had 3 Bns in Citadel and were being resupplied  
13-17 Feb – South Vietnamese Marine battalions and 3d ARVN Regiment make slow progress.  
17 Feb – NVA expected to launch major operation in Huế. Reinforcements ordered in to seal off the city:
- 3d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division (northwest)
  - 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne (south and southwest)
  - 2 Bns of Marines (east and south)
- 18-20 Feb:** 1/5 and South Vietnamese units met dogged resistance.  
NVA in Citadel fighting rearguard action.
- 21-23 Feb:** 21 Feb – 3 Bns of 1st Cavalry Division sever enemy communications and resupply lines.  
22 Feb (0300) – Co A, 1/5 launches successful night attack paving the way.  
23 Feb (0930) – 1/5 pushes forward, and enemy resistance melted. Marines capture the southern wall of the Citadel.
- 24-25 Feb:** 24 Feb (0500) – South Vietnamese national colors raised  
(1400) – Imperial Palace captured  
25 Feb (0300) – Vietnamese Marine Bn launches successful surprise attack and only mopping up remains.
- 24 Feb-2 Mar:** 26 Feb - 1/5 relieved and joined 2/5 to sweep east and north of the city  
24-27 Feb – 2/5 and 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne, involved in a largescale fight with NVA. The NVA eventually withdraw in the face of American air/artillery support.  
2 Mar – Operation Huế City terminated.

## Conclusions and Take-Aways:

- The North Vietnamese had good intel going into the battle.
- South Vietnamese and American commands were caught off stride.
- The enemy slaughtered over 4,000 civilians in Communist roundups.
- Enemy numbers were underestimated, and consequently, impractical numbers of Marines were sent to drive the enemy out of Huế.
- Reinforcements were committed piecemeal.
- Task Force X-Ray, 1st ARVN Division, and the 3d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division all fought their own battles in isolation from one another. No solitary commander united the allied effort.
- The Marines adapted their tactics and, with heroic determination, drove the NVA and Vietcong from Huế, despite being spread too thin and fire support being largely restricted.
- In addition to fighting the enemy, the Marines had to deal with population control of displaced civilians.
- There was heavy criticism by Gen. Creighton Abrams (USA) of Marine Corps and ARVN high command. He recommends that the South Vietnam Marines be disbanded.