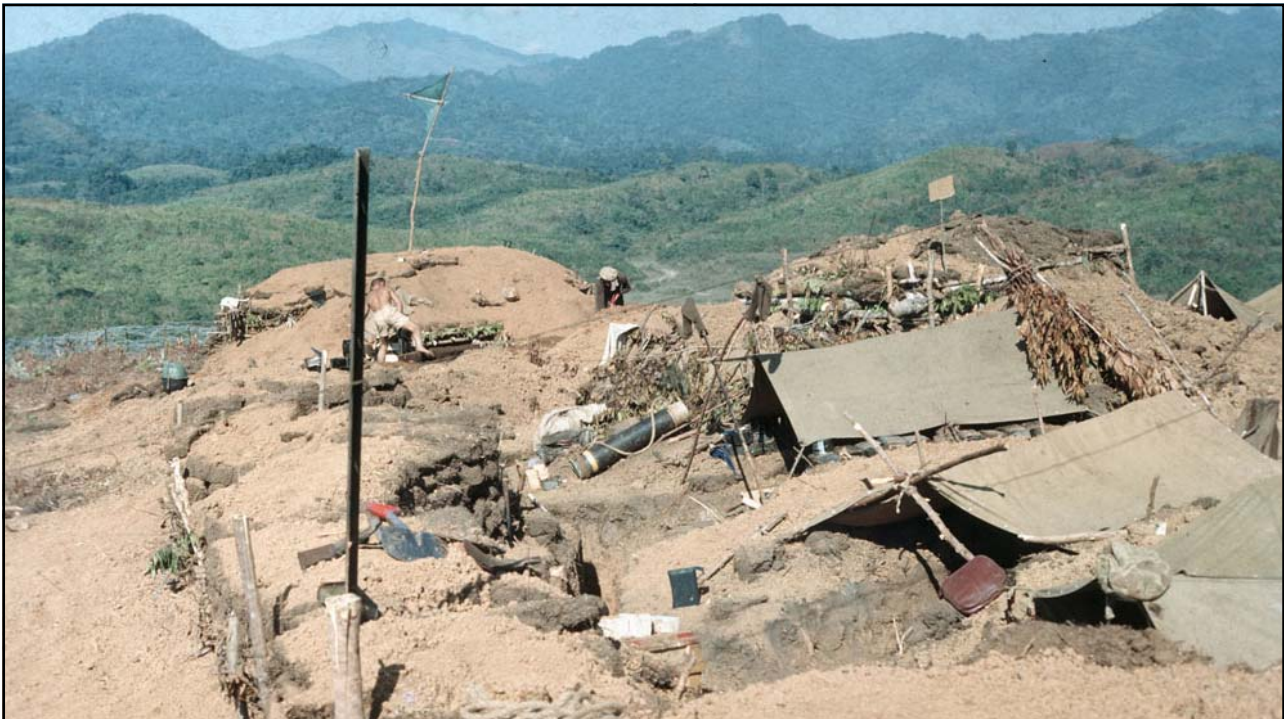


## Not enough of anything

- There were not enough construction materials to make proper bunkers at all strongpoints. Indeed the only one well built was de Castries headquarters area that included the hospital.
- Many fortifications collapsed easily, especially in heavy rains or under heavy shell fire. Houses around the valley were demolished and the lumber was used - bamboo was useless.
- Major Sudrat of the 3rd Engineer Battalion planned the airstrip, built bridges over the Nam Yum, and calculated that it would take 34,000 tons of construction materials to properly emplace Dien Bien Phu. This would have taken the whole French transport fleet in Indochina five months to deliver doing nothing else!
- In all nearly 4,000 tons were received - barbed wire, steel matting for the airstrip, bulldozers, and just 130 tons of timber - 20 tons of heavy corrugated arches roofed de Castries CP. Four water purification plants and a hospital were also built by engineers underground.
- Troops went into the woods as far as they could without being ambushed to saw timber but this was not productive. So, many thousands of sandbags appeared everywhere and creative scrounging became the order of the day. This meant vulnerability to enemy artillery. Counter attacks were delayed to allow troops to dig out after a barrage. Living conditions were appalling. Latrines became non existent and supply difficult.



## December 1953 – A costly month

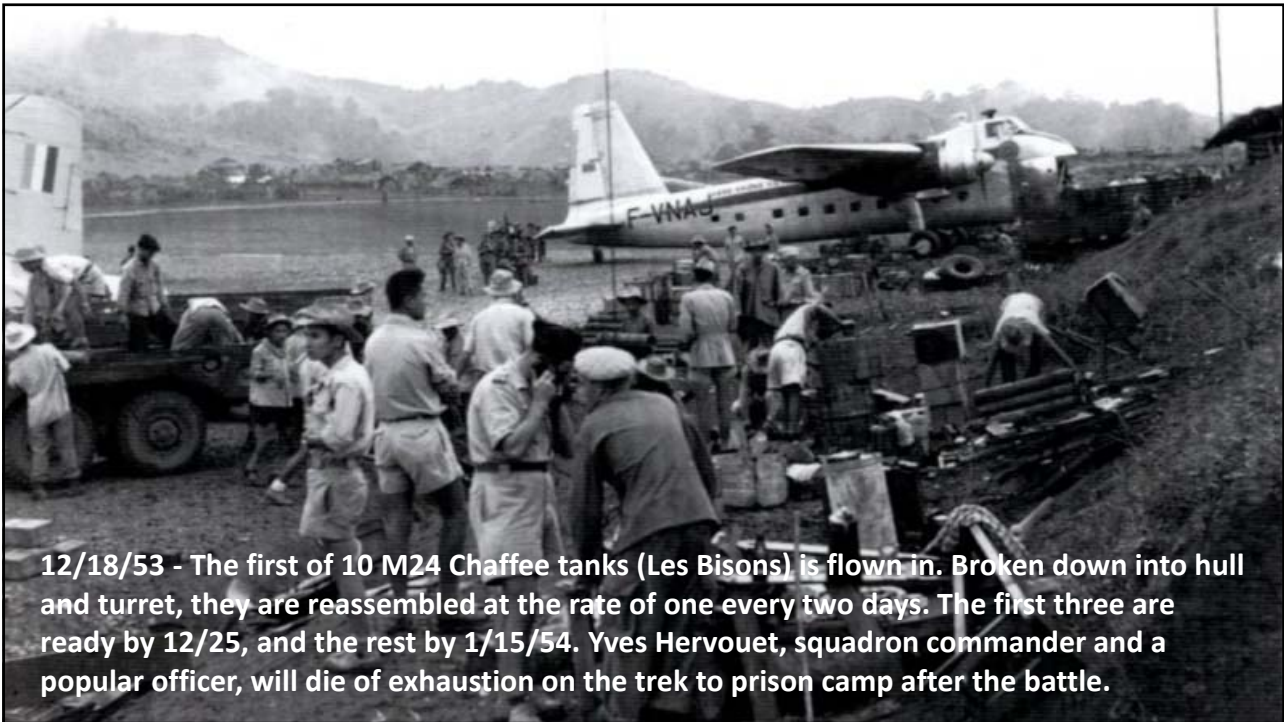
- 12/4/53 - The first sappers (engineers) of the 3rd Engineer Battalion commanded by Major Andre Sudrat are flown in. The balance arrive on December 21. The Moroccans immediately start work on the airstrip, bridges, and the command bunker. There is little time for strongpoint fortifications.
- Touret's 8th Shock leaves to assault the Viet Minh supply center at Tun Giao. The route lay 50 miles through the jungle to the northeast, and was the major Viet Minh supply dump for Dien Bien Phu.
- Major Souquet of the 1BPC (Foreign Legion) is ambushed at Ban Him Lam village just 3 miles north of Dien Bien Phu. He loses 14 dead and 26 wounded. Viet Minh dead were from the 316 Division.



## December 1953 – A costly month

- 12/7/53 - Fierce attacks by the Foreign Legion and Colonial Troops take Hill 781 to the northeast astride Route 41. It is renamed "Beatrice" and fortified.
- 12/11/53 - Touret receives orders to reverse march to the town of Muong Pong to rendezvous with the Langlais group to rescue 200 T'ai Irregulars commanded by a Sergeant Blanc at the town of Muong Pong.
- 12/12/53 - Langlais arrives - there is a white T'ai pony waiting for him to ride
- 12/13/53 - Muong Pong is taken by the Viet Minh. When the French arrive, the town is deserted and in flames. There is a 36 hour retreat under fire back to Dien Bien Phu. Muong Pong cost the Legionnaires and the Vietnamese Colonials 47 dead, 3 missing, and 69 wounded. They had been soundly beaten.



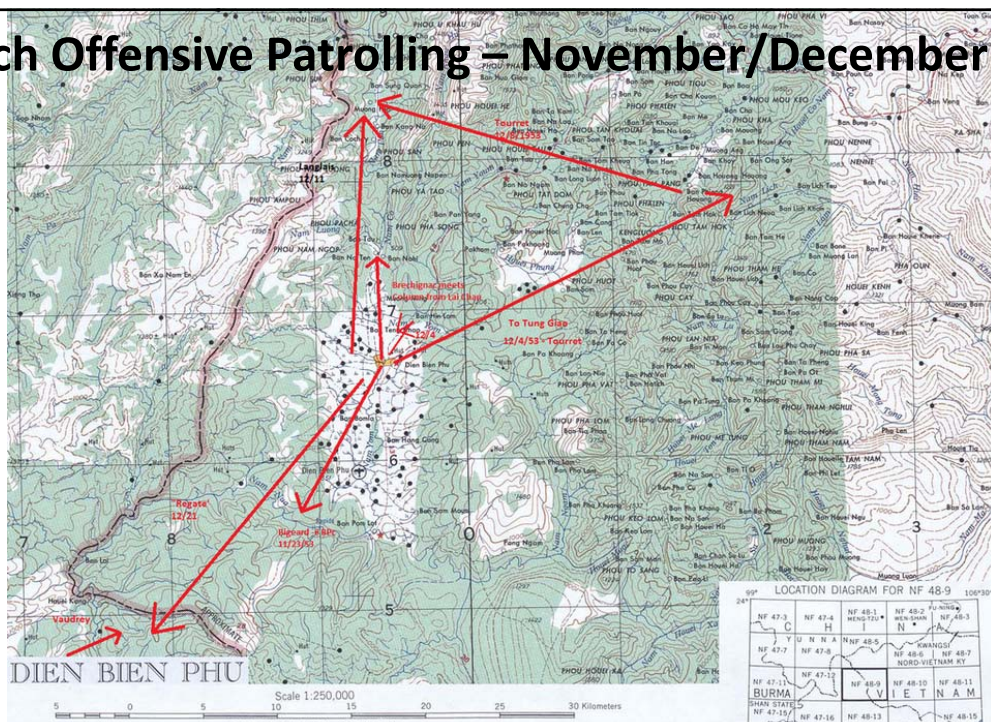


12/18/53 - The first of 10 M24 Chaffee tanks (Les Bisons) is flown in. Broken down into hull and turret, they are reassembled at the rate of one every two days. The first three are ready by 12/25, and the rest by 1/15/54. Yves Hervouet, squadron commander and a popular officer, will die of exhaustion on the trek to prison camp after the battle.

## December 1953

- 12/21/53 - Regate (Regatta) begins. It involved a thirty mile march through the jungle to the Laotian border (southwest) to Sop Nao where a rendezvous with Major Vaudrey and three battalions of Moroccan Goumiers. Two battalions were to be left at Sop Nao to create a satellite - or mini Dien Bien Phu if you will.
- 12/22/53- Last survivors of Lai Chau enter the valley.
- 12/23/53 - There is a meeting at Sop Nao. Cogy is there when they arrive to get good press. Major Vaudrey's soldiers look terrible after the march - thin, malarial, and exhausted. They had had scrapes with the Pathet Lao and Vietnamese regulars. Hands are shaken, photos taken, and the VIPs leave in their helicopters. The troops walk back to Dien Bien Phu.
- 12/25/53- General Navarre flies in to celebrate Christmas with the garrison. There are nearly 11,000 troops.
- 12/28/53 - de Castries Chief of Staff, Colonel Guth, scouts what will become Gabrielle, and dies in an ambush - the Viet Minh tighten the noose.
- 12/30/53 - A patrol comes under fire only three miles from the perimeter at the town of Ban Cang. They had sortied from Isabelle.

## French Offensive Patrolling – November/December 1953



## January 1954

- 1/1/54 - Upon the information that Division 351 has arrived in the valley with 37mm anti aircraft cannon, Navarre writes Minister Jacquet that he is no longer certain of victory. This may have been for political consumption, but it is telling.
- 1/6/54 - Tourret's Eighth shock leaves a second time for Tung Giao - the native guides got lost and the column came under attack. It was forced to return to return to Dien Bien Phu - a fiasco.
- 1/12/54 - Langlais tries again - 1er BEP (Foreign Legion) is sent to reconnoiter villages east of Isabelle and gets plastered. Ambushed at 1:30 PM, Legionnaires return at 11:40PM. Langlais was rebuked for making too much noise on his return. They suffered five dead and thirty three wounded. Sixteen Viet Minh dead were counted.
- 1/16/54- The Legionnaire's Mobile Field Brothel (BMC) arrives to much rejoicing.
- 1/18/54 - All Viet Minh units were in position and ready for the order to begin the massive assault on Dien Bien Phu.

## Indecision, and then a change of strategy

- "General, I give you full authority to decide - on one condition - if an attack is launched, you must win. If you are not certain of victory, do not launch the attack."



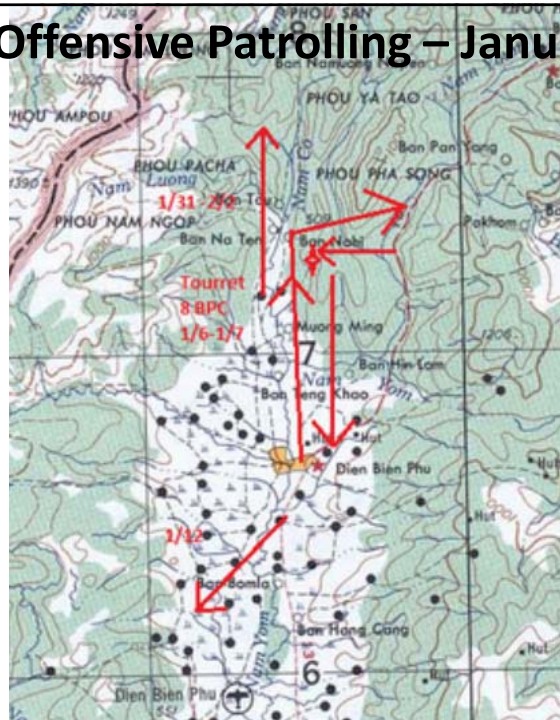
Ho Chi Minh

- General Giap had many things to agonize over. After all, he was transitioning the army to large-scale operations. But most of all, he considered the odds of winning:
  - His forces were in position, but was he making the best use of his resources?
  - Most importantly, had he and his army learned the lessons of Na San?
- Giap postponed the attack - his Bo Doi had been taking too many casualties thus far. A new strategy was needed and a new weapon – the shovel. "They (my troops) weren't happy ... not happy at all...." (Vo Nguyen Giap)

## January 1954

- Dien Bien Phu was to be an old fashioned siege; partially to keep control of the battlefield, and partially to keep casualties lower. The next step was to dig a massive trench system towards the French wire - much digging was to be done.
- 1/26/54 – Giap orders Viet Minh 75mm guns to fire ranging shots on the French positions one gun at a time. To the French it seemed that the Viet Minh had only a few pieces of artillery and were afraid of the French retaliatory arty. The French were amused - wondering if this was the best "Les Viets" could do.
- The French realised that Viet Minh resistance to offensive patrolling was too strong to allow excursions beyond a few kilometers outside the perimeter.
- 1/31/54 - Langlais tries again. A strong column marches towards Hill 683 - 2,000 metres north of Isabelle. It runs into prepared Viet positions and a sharp engagement develops.
- 1530- A lieutenant Negre is killed. He has on him a map of the valley dropped that day or the day before. It give the communists detailed knowledge of French positions in the valley. Artillery fire becomes more accurate.

## French Offensive Patrolling – January 1954



## February - March 1954

- Work continues on strengthening French defensive positions.
- Viet Minh dig over 100 km of trenches in many cases right up to the outer French wire. More than 100,000 porters continue to haul ammunition and supplies and improve roads to handle Chinese and Soviet trucks.
- General Giap undertakes wide ranging diversionary moves:
  - The 308<sup>th</sup> Division is withdrawn and moves south towards Luang Prabang. Along the way they strike French forces in Laos moving towards Dien Bien Phu. The French are completely fooled and the 308<sup>th</sup> covertly returns to Dien Bien Phu.
  - 3 March 1954 - A commando attack at Hanoi - Gia Lam Airport destroys five Dakotas and five other aircraft.
  - 7 March 1954 - Another attack at Cat Bi destroys four B 26s and six "Cricket" reconnaissance aircraft.
  - Giap continues to withhold his 105mm howitzers and 120mm mortars from action. When they finally open fire, the French are shocked.

## March 13, 1954 – the battle begins

- 3/13/54 - 1000 - Artillery starts firing on the airstrip. A C-119 and a Dakota were destroyed.
- 1500 – The tempo of shelling increases.
- 1718 - The Viet Minh artillery opens fire - most concentrated on Beatrice and Claudine. Seen from afar, it looks like their positions are disintegrating under the enemy fires. More ominous, flak opens fire for the first time.
- 1830 - Major Pegot and his staff on Beatrice are killed in a direct hit on their command bunker.
- 2030 - Last French wire on Beatrice is breached. Colonel Gaucher of the Foreign Legion is killed with his staff by an artillery shell in their command bunker. A large part of the Viet Minh artillery was American 105mm howitzers captured by China from the Nationalist Chinese.
- 2058 - "Viets are all over the place." Then silence.



## March 14, 1954

- 0015 - On Beatrice, the 9th Company's (Foreign Legion) radio is silent. The last radio message from Beatrice: "Alles Tod." "Here sector commander let me speak to an officer." "Alles Tod." "Tell me your unit Goddammit." Silence. Out of Beatrice's garrison of 750, 2 Lieutenants and 192 men survived.
- 0030- First attacks on Gabrielle are beaten off.
- 0730- A counterattack on Beatrice with tanks is called off. 100 survivors from Beatrice make it to friendly lines.
- The Vietminh offer a truce to pick up wounded (and give them a chance to position replacement units). The wounded were brought in and all devoutly hoped they could be flown out. The counterattack on Beatrice was never re-started.
- 0800 - A plane drops off blood for the hospital and picks up de Castries private secretary, Paule Bourgeade - the only French woman assigned to the garrison. Later in the day an airborne surgical team is dropped in and assigned to Isabelle.



## March 14, 1954

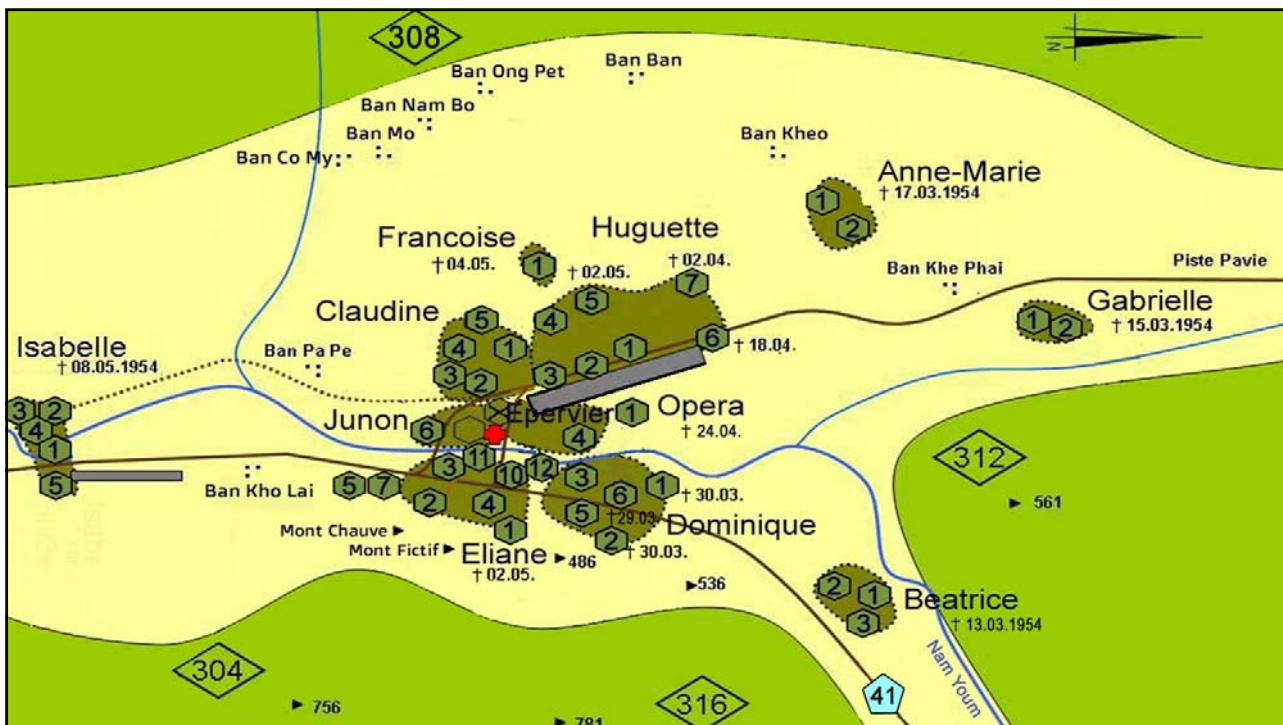
- 1400 - The remaining two flyable F6F Bearcats take off before the Viets can react and make it to Cat Bi airbase at Haiphong. The last six F6Fs are destroyed by artillery.
- 1445 - Major Andre Botella's Fifth Vietnamese Parachute Battalion (5BPVN) is dropped in. Colloquially known as the Bawouan, they will give a good account of themselves.
- 1800 - The Viets begin to shell Gabrielle.
- 2000 - 5BPVN is committed to the battle for Gabrielle - garrisoned by French and Algerians.
- In an all too common fashion, the heavy weapons bunker on Beatrice collapses,
- 2200 - 4th company Command Bunker collapses - Lt. Moreau is killed. Regiments 88 and 102 of the Viet 308 Division outnumber the defenders 8-1.



## March 15, 1954

- 0330- Bombardment of Beatrice starts again after a 2-3 hour pause.
- 0430- Command Bunker on Beatrice hit - second in command Major Kah loses a leg (he dies in a prison camp) and Major de Mecquenem is wounded and knocked out. Gabrielle requests an immediate counterattack. Communications are spotty.
- 0530 - Foreign Legion and 5BPVN attack and come under heavy fire immediately. Parts of the 5BPVN were caught in open behind Hervouet's tanks and froze. The attack failed. Langlais was accused of favouring French troops over Vietnamese.
- 0730 - Soldiers on Beatrice surrender.
- 0830- Counterattacking troops pull back to Anne-Marie and Huguette. French casualties numbered over 1,000 troops. The Viet Minh were said to have lost four times that number.
- Two F6Fs attempt to bomb and strafe enemy positions, but one is shot down. Only 12-13 tons of supplies are dropped that day.
- 2000 - The 3rd T'ai Battalion disintegrates, simply melting into the forest.





## A cost of overconfidence

- Some of de Castries Staff broke under the pressure.
  - Artillery Commander Henri Piroth, after trying to apologise to anyone and everyone for his blunders, lay down in his bunk and killed himself with a grenade.
  - Chief of Staff Keller has a nervous breakdown. Wearing a helmet he sat in the deepest part of the command dug out and didn't move. He is medivaced.
  - De Castries himself becomes more withdrawn.
- Cogy's Headquarters in Hanoi is in deep gloom- the General says to anyone who listens that he was against the operation from the start - he had been happy enough early on when it was thought to be doing well.



## March 16, 1954

- 0105 -Dien Bien Phu requests replacement personnel for a whole artillery battery.
- 0448 -Rain, medium to heavy - Dien Bien Phu requests replacement artillery pieces, crews, ammunition was a priority- the artillery had fired between one third of its 155mm shells and 12,600 105mm rounds out of 27,000.
- 0630- Delivery priority; Personnel, a new radio beacon, medical supplies, Dismantled artillery pieces, ammunition, infantry ammunition, food - shades of Stalingrad. The drop zones have to be occupied and protected from enemy fires.
- 1105 - Major Bigeards's 6th Colonial Parachute Battalion (6BCP) is dropped in. It amounts to 613 men - also 100 replacements for the First Foreign Legion Parachute Battalion (1BEP).



## March 17, 1954

- The Viet Minh send word that 86 wounded will be left to the north of Anne-Marie- this further complicates congestion in the hospital as very few are airlifted out to date. T'ai soldiers on Anne Marie continue to desert - Propaganda has its effect.
- 1500- The 6th Airborne Surgical Team commanded by Lt. Vidal drops in.
- 1900 - A C 47 braves a landing, picks up 32 wounded, and takes off. A second lands, waits in an artillery barrage and takes off with none.

## March 18-19, 1954

### March 18

- As the airport has become too dangerous for unloading cargo, parachute drops are requested, and this becomes the primary means of supply until the end.
- 1525 - Viet Minh trenches cut off Isabelle

### March 19

- 1055 - an ambulance aircraft picks up 23 wounded. Over the next 10 days 324 wounded are evacuated - mainly by landing at night.



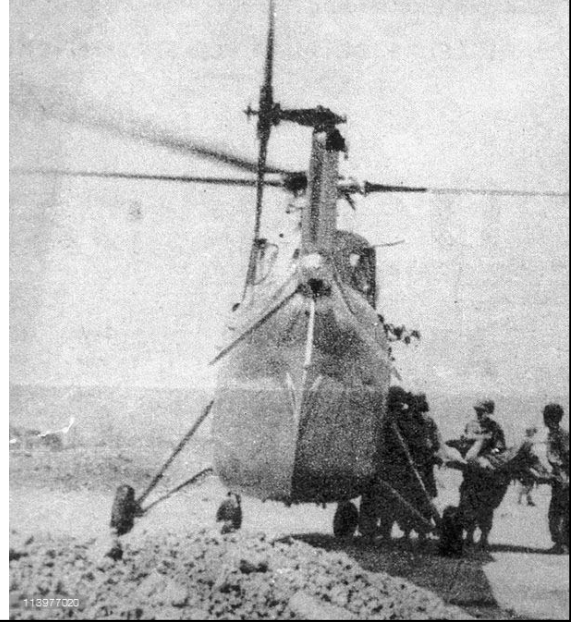
## Week 2 – 20-26 March 1954 (The Lull)

- 3/21/54 - 0300 - Viet Minh commandos blow a hole in the airstrip near the Huguettes. Attempts to clear the road from Isabelle to the main positions are stymied.
- 3/22/54 - Bigeard's paras are pinned down in a firefight near Dominique - a C-47 gets away with a cargo of wounded - 25 artillerymen are dropped in.
- 0730 - An attack to clear the road to Isabelle commences. At this date, far from patrolling the countryside, the French were having a very hard time keeping roads open a few miles away from headquarters - the attack succeeds by 1200-1230 when forces fighting from Isabelle join hands but only because armor was brought in to support the attack. This cost 151 dead, 72 wounded, and one missing - a price that could not be paid every day to keep roads open.
- Aerial photos dropped to Castries show a widening network of trenches around and close to the French positions.



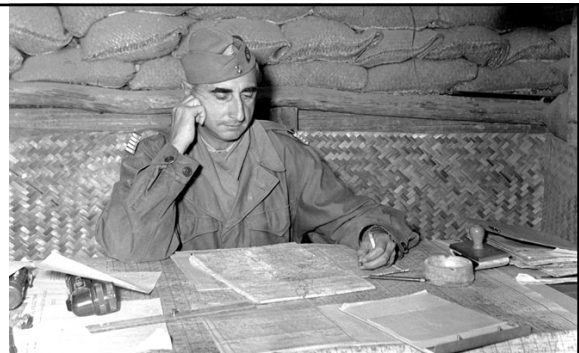
## Week 2 – 20-26 March 1954 (The Lull)

- 3/23/54 - Two helicopters crash trying to bring wounded out - one pilot killed.
- Large amounts of napalm are dropped in Viet trenches all around the perimeter.
- 3/24/54 - 0710 - Lt. Colonel Keller is evacuated with other wounded.
- 3/25/54 - Fighting in the Dominiques and Elianes - Tourret's 8th Shock at Dominique. the 1BEP and the 5BPVN at the Elianes.
- Further efforts to keep the road to Isabelle open meet with resistance enough for tanks to be called in. Isabelle again proves expensive.



## A quiet change of command

- By this time, de Castries, for whatever reason, had withdrawn into himself and ceased to exert effective command. Personally brave, he had never visited wounded and was remote- some thought effete in the manners he affected.
- According to witnesses, Langlais and the other paratroop commanders simply walked into de Castries office and told him that Langlais was assuming command then and there. Outwardly de Castries would be in command and liaise with Hanoi; Langlais now commanded all else.
- Surprisingly the two remained on good terms. When possible they played bridge in the evenings.



## Generals at war

- A letter arrived from General Cogny (left) in Hanoi;

**CONFIDENTIAL**

GONO  
The rainy season, now close at hand,  
will compromise enemy communications  
lines and will oppose a major obstacle  
of mud to the development of his field  
fortifications.  
Cogny **CONFIDENTIAL**

- High command in Hanoi was completely out of touch. Saigon wasn't much better.
- Many if not most communications sent were historical justification on the parts of Navarre (right) in Saigon and Cogny in Hanoi.



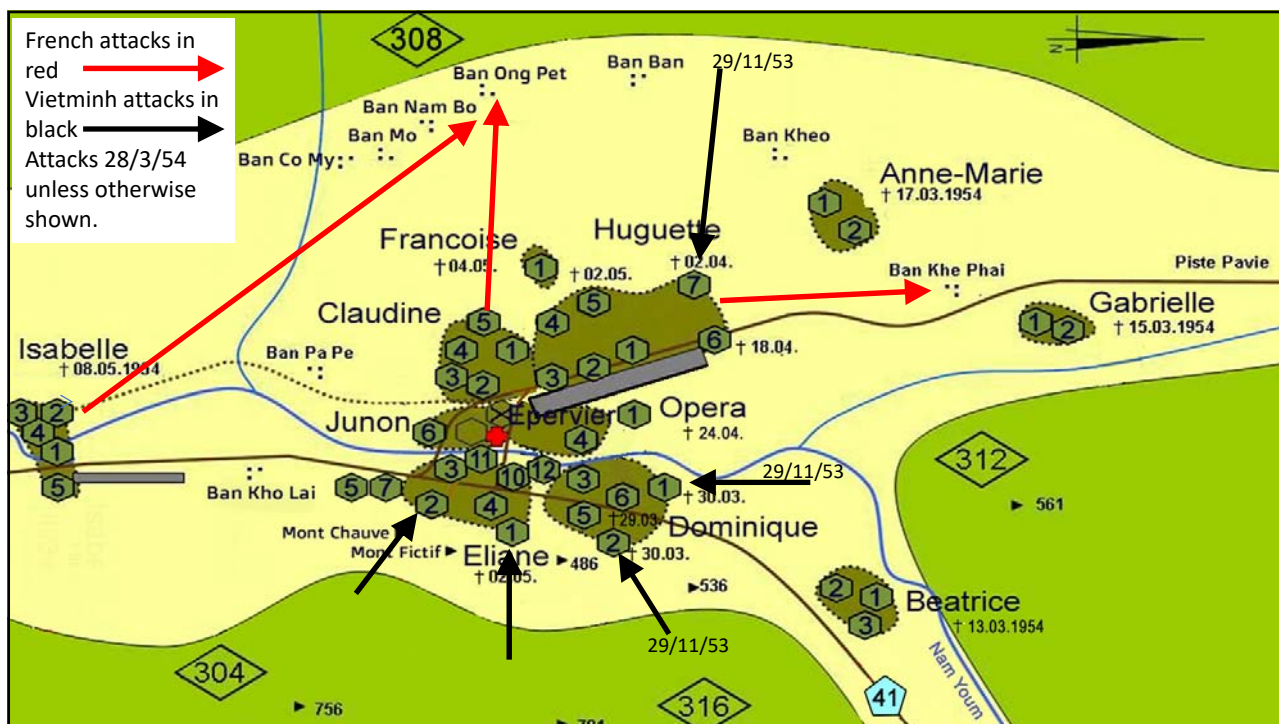
## Week 3 – 27 March-2 April 1954

- 3/27/54 - 0700- A C-47 manages to land and wounded back to Hanoi.
- 1000- The same transport is shot down by 37mm AA guns trying to make a second trip. The crew is killed.
- 1750- Another Dakota crashes and burns (Transport Group 2/63 "Senegal")
- In the evening, one C-47 lands and takes off with 19 wounded. As on all flights, its crew included a Women's Air Force nurse. It was the last to take off from Dien Bien Phu.



## Week 3 – 27 March-2 April 1954

- 28 March 1954 – de Castries, referring to Bigeard as “Mon petit Bruno” orders him to attack the AA guns a mile west of Claudine near the village of Bang Ong Pet. Seguin Pazzis leads the rest of the 1BEP to clean out the area of Ban Ke Phai.
- 0200 - Bigeard briefs his commanders; Turret (8th Assault), Guiraud (1BEP), Thomas (6BPC), Clemencop (2REI), Hervouet (tanks) and Vaillant (Artillery). Success lay in total surprise - get in and get out before the enemy could react - destroy the flak emplacements.
- 0600 - Jump off - the 6BPC runs into stiff resistance at Bang Ong Pet but tanks from Isabelle smash it. The fighting goes on until the afternoon around the town - a melee - hand to hand- no quarter given or asked for.
- 1530 - A French victory - the Viet Minh were forced from the town in disorder and substantial amounts of anti aircraft guns captured or destroyed. 350 Vietminh bodies are counted. French losses are 20 killed and 90 wounded, but these are irreplaceable losses from the best units in the fortress.  
(French Attacks in red, Vietminh attacks in black)





## 30 March 1954

- 0530 - The attacks are sealed off in the remaining Huguettes and Elianes.
- Between March 28 and April 2 the garrison would lose 2,093 men.
- Bigeard and Langlais decide to counterattack Dominique 1 and Eliane 2.
- The artillery suffered also: "On March 30, there had been twenty-one out of twenty-four 105mm howitzers available, along with three heavy 155's. On March 31, there remained eighteen howitzers, two 155's and seventeen out of thirty two 120mm heavy mortars.
- Colonel Lalande, Commander of strongpoint Isabelle made a point of telling his troops that the Viet Minh had 105mm guns and that they had to put at least a meter of earth above their heads. They took his advice seriously, and the Colonel, an artillery officer, made sure he inspected the bunkers personally. Isabelle's garrison would come back from the main camp shaking their heads at how poorly their defences had been made.

## 1 April 1954

- 4/1/54 - The Foreign Legion still holds Eliane 2. in the last week the 6BPC (Colonial Parachute Battalion) has lost 46 dead and 183 wounded. The Legionnaires had 46 dead and 189 wounded in the fight for the Elianes.
- 1400 - T'ai companies on Françoise are disintegrating - this adds more strain to a defense stretched paper thin.
- A night drop of the a company of paras and a part of the 35th Airborne Artillery is executed. Langlais tells Hanoi that reinforcements must be dropped all over the valley instead of trying to hit drop zones- the transports are too exposed to flak- this causes a heated confrontation between military bureaucrats in Hanoi and Dien Bien Phu - Hanoi insists on proper drop zones
- 2200- The 312th Division renews attacks on Huguette 7 - now reduced to a lunar landscape with no recognisable fortification
- 2230 - 312th attacks Huguette 6 - control of the airstrip is at stake and fighting is desperate.



## 2 April 1954

- 0045 - Isabelle is hit so hard by artillery that four of its 11 artillery pieces can fire.
- 0400 - Huguette 7 is crawling with Bo Doi and the worst is feared - for the garrison and the airstrip. A counter attack by Vietnamese paratroopers and the Foreign Legion amazingly find friendly troops at Huguette 7 holding out - 13 survivors.
- 0805 - Huguette 7 is abandoned - there simply are not enough troops and heavy weapons to defend it.
- "There were exactly four serviceable 105s left at Isabelle and eight at Dien Bien Phu. After seventy two hours of continuous fighting, their crews were in a catatonic state."
- 1830- Replacements are dropped over the airstrip - a few from the Second Colonial parachute battalion and 30 or so men from the 35th Airborne Artillery to replace decimated gun crews - a drop in the bucket.
- 1035 - Isabelle reports nine guns capable of firing but only six crews - the rest were killed earlier.
- 2045 - Isabelle again reports artillery fire- it lists 1,663 troops - most are cast offs from formations that have broken - T'ais they face twice their number.

## 3 - 4 April 1954

- 0500 - Huguette 6 is under attack and Huguette 1 is surrounded - Bangalore torpedoes blow holes in the wire. The strongpoint is garrisoned by only 100 troops, Legionnaires commanded by Lt. Rastouil, that had held out for 15 days.
- 1925 - An attack is stopped by tank fire and troops from the 8BPC.
- In a rare piece of good fortune for the garrison, a large part of the First Light Infantry Para Battalion under Major Jean Brechignac drops in. Brechignac lands in barbed wire and loses his trousers.

### 4 April

- By dawn 305 men, and sixteen equipment bags had been dropped in.
- 2200- Assault on the Huguettes by the 312th Division.

## 5 April 1954

- 0030- Huguette 6 is attacked from west, north, and east.
- 0115 -Reinforcements are fed in. Tanks and a company of infantry - tank 'Conti", blows up on a mine.
- 0420- Captain Cledic and his company of the First Light Paras attack on the run and literally mow the Viets down. H 6 is saved. 20 of the original garrison survived. There are 900 Viet bodies around H6 and the 312th Division loses the use of a regiment. The French had a victory, a truly Pyrrhic one as casualties could not be replaced at the rate they were dribbling in.
- 1400 - The Viet Minh abandon Eliane 2. 1,500 Viet Minh and 300 French corpses rot on Eliane 2 - the stench is awful.
- 1RCP receives another 177 men dropped in.

## 6 April 1954

- Legionnaires push a strong patrol to Ban Co My - no resistance undoubtedly due to the casualties taken by the Viets the day before.
- Artillery ammunition has become very short - enough for one day of heavy use. The supply of mines had run out. Flare rounds for 81mm mortars - indispensable for night fighting, had run out. A drop of ammunition falls behind Viet lines near Ban Co My- contempt for the transport pilots is palpable.
- 0930 -"Dien Bien Phu requested three tank commanders, two tank gunners, one driver, and one radioman."
- A last plane lands on the strip. A Morane 500 "Cricket" Observation plane is hit, the crew wounded, and upon landing the plane is destroyed by artillery. The pilot, Lieutenant de La Mestrie is killed , and the Observer, Sergeant Ribiere, was pulled from the wreck - he survived.



## 7-9 April 1954 End of Week 4

- 4/7/54 - Enemy trenches around Isabelle 5 are cleared by attack. The remaining T'ais at Huguette 2 desert. The positions are taken over by the Vietnamese paras - still loyal to France, they gave a fine account of themselves and fought with a cold fury.
- Giap reviews his strategy and decides to keep digging approach trenches - his frontal attacks have proven too costly, and he is not completely satisfied with his artillery.
- In Dien Bien Phu the hospital has 590 wounded and there many more at battalion aid posts. The first cases of combat fatigue are occurring. 25 days of combat mostly at night, sleeping during the day, meals eaten cold, and nervous exhaustion made for a miserable existence. Rather than expose themselves to enemy fire the troops urinated and defecated by digging a hole - sometimes in their own trench - the stench was a feature of Dien Bien Phu. it was very much a World War One battle.
- 2200 - An exchange of wounded takes place at Ban Ban. No words are exchanged.
- 4/9/54 - Half of the Second Foreign Legion Parachute Battalion (Major Liesenfelt) is dropped in. They land all over the place. Surprisingly not many are lost, but it

## Week 5 begins – 10 April 1954

- 0610 -Sixth Colonial Paras lead the attack - they have been reduced to 280-300 troops. They follow closely artillery blasts up the slope of Eliane 1. "It was desperate work - their breath sawing, hearts pounding, legs aching as they forced their way up the slope, one hand clamped down on a bouncing helmet, head constantly swivelling to catch a blurred movement out of the corner of one eye, raking bursts of half aimed fire out of instinct, clawing for a new clip or a grenade."
- Navy dive bombers work over the rear of Eliane.
- 1000 - The new arrivals are put in reserve at Epervier and the center of the Headquarters area. 29 die by nightfall.
- 1400- The summit of Eliane 1 is retaken. 300 enemy dead are counted around the hilltop- 6me BPC- 13 dead, 26 wounded, 10 missing.
- 1845 First Viet Minh counter attack by the 98th Regiment of the 316th Division. - the 6th holds on - just - until relieved by a few companies of 2nd RCP at nightfall just in time to be on the receiving end of an artillery strike.
- The remainder of the 2me BEP is dropped in.

## 11-13 April

- 0000- The Bo Doi have had enough - they leave behind 300-400 dead.
- For the next few weeks companies are cycled through Eliane 1 for 48 hours, decimated and then relieved - much like Verdun.
- From this point on, the paratroop mafia, lead by Langlais, are in command of the defense. (Brechignac, Chenel, Guiraud, Turret, and Vadot. Bigeard became Deputy Commander of Counterattacks. At this point, "the progressive alienation, if not estrangement of deCastries from the battle was part of a process which to this day is not clearly understood even by the men who witnessed it.
- 4/12/54 - Four B26s accidentally drop their bombs over the camp - three dead - two wounded.
- 0700 - Regiment 98 is again forced to leave Eliane 1 after an attack -
- 1130 - A big four engined Air Force PB4Y is shot down. Two of the crew survived to be taken prisoner.
- 4/13/54 1915 - Heavy bombardment of Claudine - one howitzer destroyed, ammunition depot set afire -

## End of Week 5: 14-16 April 1954

- 4/14/54 - The second battle for the Huguettes starts. Viet Minh troops dig a trench across the airstrip between Huguette 1 and Huguette 2 Huguette 1 and 6 are sealed off from the rest of the fortress. At the same time Giap requests 720 tons of ammunition from the Chinese and recalls troops from Laos and other locations; Mountaneer Battalions 910 and 920, Battalion 970 of the 316th Division, signals companies, heavy weapons companies - all on the way. Also requested from China - a flak regiment of 67 37mm guns.
- Through de Castries Langlais briefs Cogne on the situation and demands replacements -five aircraft each night - As to the air supply system, American parachutes from Japan made the drops possible - the French had run out.
- 4/15/54 - The troops at H 6 were short on water- a half gallon per man per day was necessary. 100 gallons, 20 standard jerrycans- the Viet Minh prisoners transported the water. Early in the morning of the 15th an escorted water party was pinned down for four hours between Huguette 1 and 2 trying to get to Huguette 6. They got through at 0420. In order to get back to friendly lines, two diversionary attacks are launched, men lost and at the end of the day Huguette 6 is still surrounded.

## End of Week 5: 14-16 April 1954

- That evening a nervous pilot bounced around by Viet Minh flak dropped a set of aerial photographs with French positions at Dien Bien Phu and all of North Vietnam for the fortress - they ended up in Giap's hands.
- Isabelle is cut off from the main camp - Strongpoint Wieme just south of Isabelle more so. The troops on Isabelle have their hands full just keeping a route open from Wieme to Isabelle let alone to Claudine.
- 4/16/54 - Losses trying to supply Huguette 6 cannot be sustained - Huguette 1 is surrounded

## 17 April 1954 – A small place gets smaller

- The hospital reports its first cases of gangrene. It has become a charnel house. Men lay in their own filth, maggots were rampant. There were no disinfectants, no fresh blood, no alcohol. Panicked patients were told that maggots only fed on dead flesh.
- Troops were on short rations from 14 April onwards; "... there were six different types of food rations allocated; European, North African, African, Vietnamese, T'ai Auxiliary, and PIM - the PW's." Any supply system would be strained; canned rations now became a staple. Hanoi had a daily choice: what is the priority – food, medicine, ammunition or materials?
- 1820 – de Castries accepts Langlais' suggestion to evacuate Huguette 6.
- 2000 - Bigeard commits the 1BEP and Legion infantry to break through to Huguette 6 to relieve and extricate the garrison. Two of the remaining tanks provide support. It's not going well. At 2200, Pierre Langlais exclaims, "Out of breath, out of ammunition, and out of men."

## 18 April 1954 – A small place gets smaller

- 0200 – Relief of Huguette 6 is stopped as the attack is being creamed.
- 0730 - Bigeard gives up - the attempt is costing more than it is worth. The Commanding officer at Huguette 6, Captain Bizard is given the choice to surrender if he chooses or to attempt breakout.
- 0800 - Bizard attempts breakout. Wounded and heavy equipment are left to the Viet Minh- they sprint for their own lines. Merely 300 yards away - "A l'assaut!" - the Viet Minh are flabbergasted- never thinking the French would be foolish enough to attempt breakout. The French yell and sing as they run.
- 1040 - 106 dead, 49 wounded, 79 missing. The remainder make it to Huguette 2.
- A bitter de Castries blames Hanoi for no new maps or trench binoculars - they had been requested on April 13.
- Units are running out of platoon commanders.

## 19 April 1954

- 0030 - A relief force for Huguette 1 is on the way to relieve the weary garrison - Foreign legionnaires start the move. They are able to proceed though the "metro" the covered tunnels that were used to move men and supplies until Huguette 2. Then, a rush on open ground to Huguette 1. They get nowhere - pinned down almost immediately.
- 0645 - artillery and airstrikes inflict enough damage to allow arrival at Huguette.
- 1000 - the relief force in place, the relieved Legion Infantry (4 Company 2REI) was enroute south. It took the relief 14 hours to cover 1,500 yards- while the French were not ready to give up, such effort expended to relieve a post so close meant the game was up.
- 1400 -A patrol gets as far as Ban Co My before running into resistance.
- 2200 -The Air Force drops two sticks of volunteers into enemy lines - a few make it into the fortress - the rest are dead.
- The garrison is enraged- had there been any Air Force personnel handy, they might have been lynched. The carrier pilots were exempt.

## 20 April 1954

- A Viet Minh prisoner brings news of difficulties on the other side. French airstrikes are causing losses among the porters and other supply personnel. Replacements are very young and untrained. Rains also made living in the hills uncomfortable. French artillery was feared. But more Chinese “advisors” are arriving and Chinese crews are manning the 37mm anti aircraft cannon and other artillery.
- 1000 - Request for an airstrike on Dominique 1 which has become an observation post directing deadly fire on headquarters and batteries.
- Colonial Paras raid Dominique 6. Held by the Viet Minh for over a month, they were surprised, losing 19 dead, 3 prisoners and 4 bunkers destroyed.

## 21-22 April 1954

### 21 April 1954

- Attempts to supply Huguette 1 meet with the same situation - the outpost costs more to supply and defend than it is worth. In this fashion, Dien Bien Phu contracts. Troop strength at Isabelle - 1,400 and 117 in the hospital that cannot be evacuated.
- 1045 - A mixed force of Legionnaires and Vietnamese Paras set out to supply Huguette 1 and are stymied.
- 1400 - Langlais orders the attempt abandoned. A good date for airdrops- 135 tons dropped - not much lost. But, the last three trucks are destroyed and after this bulky supply containers cannot be collected. The supply system breaks down.

### 22 April 1954

- 0840- A force manages to break through to Huguette 1 and another raids Dominique 5.

## End of Week 6 13 April 1954

- 0210 - On Huguette 1 Captain Chevalier radios "the Viet seems to be getting through all over the place." At 0230 there is a last request for help- then silence.
- 0700 - Some Legionnaires reach Huguette 2 - Chevalier is dead. The Viet practice of digging approach trenches on all sides and charging in small groups is proven.
- 0900 - Over Langlais' objections, de Castries orders an attack on Huguette 1.
- 1400 - After softening up by mortar fire and airstrikes by B 26s the counterattack begins. It comes under very heavy fire almost immediately. The attack commander Liesenfelt sat by his radios waiting for information, but he was tuned to the wrong channels! The CP radios heard desperate cries for help- and Bigeard was told to find out what was going on. Liesenfelt thought the attack was fine - he had heard nothing. Bigeard checked his radios - assumed command of the attack.
- 1525 - The attack called off. 150 men killed or wounded. Liesenfelt was relieved of command. Overnight 72 volunteers are parachuted in. 99 tons of supplies fell in French lines.

## 24-26 April 1954

- 4/24/54 - 3250 infantrymen fit for combat - 1400 on Isabelle. 878 seriously wounded in hospital. Giap has reinforced his formations - 35,000 infantrymen. Foreign Legion patrols again reach Ban Co My.
- 4/25/54 - 0235 - Captain Bizard reports digging noises near the Opera. Infiltration reported at Dominique 4 - artillery responds - muddy ground mutes effect of shells. The rains have flooded and collapsed dugouts - some wounded drown in the mud.
- 0330 - Mortars hit Eliane 1. The Viet trenches are close enough for them to throw hand grenades.
- 0600 - Artillery fire on Eliane 1 demolishes fortifications. Counterbattery fire does little.
- A word on the supply situation; daily minimum is 125 tons. A total of 63 have been dropped with 51 replacements. Artillery and mortar shells are almost gone. The entire garrison is awarded the *Croix de Guerre*. Cogny and Navarre agonize over sending in further reinforcements. Cogny estimates with reinforcements the fortress could last two to three weeks- without, days. He is against reinforcement.



## 27-28 April 1954

- Supply drops are inadequate the evening of the 26th-27th. 50 volunteers - but at long last flak jackets are dropped.
- 0400-Hundreds of Viet Minh trucks- Molotovs deliver supplies to the besieging garrison they are protected by weather. Viet Minh sappers are heard digging under the Eliaes.
- The all but finished French artillery must save shells for assaults. The remaining 155mm's barrel is worn out.
- Lieutenant Cledic executes a successful raid - three bunkers blown up, 12 Viets KIA, and three prisoners who confirm low morale. Many Viet Minh officers and men who had had enough, and needed to be re-educated. The Commanders asked for one last effort against the French.
- 4/28/54 - 0115 -0200 -Rain - 24 volunteers parachuted in. Isabelle got 22 tons of supplies, Dien Bien Phu, nothing.
- 2200 - Paras from Huguette 4 go through the wire and raid a trench - 3 wounded vs. 20+ Viet Minh KIA. A trench raid - in 1954?

## 29 April 1954

- More rain- mud in some trenches is 3 feet deep. Fighting is primarily trench warfare.
- 25-30 tons of supplies arrive overnight but no replacements. The garrison lives on rice with fish sauce and corned beef.
- Another trench raid on sappers by the 8BPC (Colonial Para) succeeds in filling up a few trenches a forward bunker is blown up.
- Giap orders shelling of the whole fortress, killing ten, wounding 26 wounded, and destroying 200 daily rations. 600 artillery shells go up with a huge blast, creating a crater that quickly becomes a lake.
- 0940 - Digging through a hill on Dominique, the Viets now hit the position with direct fire.
- 1800- Genevieve de Galarde is awarded the *Croix de Guerre* and the *Knights Cross of the Legion of Honor* for her service with the wounded by Bigeard.
- 2225 - Fortifications at strongpoint Wieme are all but destroyed by 57mm and 105mm fires. With the aid of one tank it is still held, just.

## 30 April 1954

- Camerone Day; the "holiest" holiday of the Foreign Legion calendar in memory of a battle the Legion lost gloriously in Mexico in 1863.
- The Air Force makes an effort - 212 tons of supplies are dropped - 65 tons fall into enemy hands.
- 0200 - Isabelle reports C-47s dropping paras all over the place from high altitude and then turning back for Hanoi - they are absolutely furious. 65 men land; but Isabelle is running out of artillery shells.
- 0630- Viet Minh raids on Dominique 3 - A Viet Minh prisoner is taken - 16 years old and doesn't know which unit he is in. He was drafted on April 8<sup>th</sup>. He stated that the French along Route 41 are causing much destruction.
- 2200- A raid on trenches south of Eliane 2 nets two cases of Vinogel - the Armies concentrated wine gel. The Legionnaires got the wine back - all volunteered!
- The senior Legion officer, Lemeunier, reads the Camerone Declaration over loudspeaker to the soldiers. By tradition on that day deserving individuals could receive honorary induction into the Legion. Genevieve de Gallard was the first.

## Start of Week 8 - 1 May 1954

- 43 volunteers drop in. 50% of drops fail due to bad parachute opening delay fuses.
- The 308th Peoples Division attacks Huguette 5 with its 227th battalion.
- With the drop there are three days of food available, 275 155mm shells, 5000 120mm mortar rounds, and 14,000 105mm shells. In heavy fighting the supply of shells would be good for one day. There were 2750-2900 able bodied combatants.
- 0230 - The French counterattack at Huguette 5.
- 0600 - The Viet Minh retreat. Two hours later Huguette 5 is cleared.
- 1200 - Supply drop begins- not much interference from flak. "...everybody became convinced that something serious was afoot." There are signs of probes from the 312th and 316th Divisions - this is ominous as they are two of the best Viet Minh divisions. The Viet Minh celebrated May Day, but were on the move.

## 1 May 1954

- 1700 - Viet Minh preparatory fires for the final assault begin - Claudine, Huguette and the Hospital are badly hit. Later on the fires switched to Dominique 3 and Eliane 4.
- 2000 - The 312th and 316th Divisions storm the hills. Dominique 3 falls. Eliane 1 falls. In plain view a battery of 16 105mm cannon immolates the remaining Huguettes under a storm of fire.
- 2005 - Huguette 5 falls. The commander, Lieutenant de Stabenrath, will die in a POW camp. " No more reserves left. Fatigue and wear and tear on the units terrible. Supplies and ammunition insufficient. Quite difficult to resist one more such push by Communists, at least without bringing in one new battalion of excellent quality."
- Cogny decides to lift in the 1 Battalion de Parachutiste Colonial (1st Colonial Parachute Battalion - from France. They arrive in Indochina the day Dien Bien Phu falls.

## 2 May 1954

- 0200 - Viet Regiment 57 gets into Wieme.
- 0207 - Eliane 1 and Dominique 3 have fallen. Huguette 4 is under attack.
- 0250 - 107 men of the 1BPC drop into the fortress.
- 0250 - Viet Minh attack switches to Eliane 2.
- 0305 - Second Viet Minh attack on Huguette 4.
- 0625 - Enemy stopped at Huguette 4, Eliane 2, and Eliane 4. Now that Dominique 3 is lost, all of the camp is in direct sight of the Viet Minh artillery spotters. Losses for the night and morning; 28 dead, 168 wounded, 303 missing.
- 1220- French units regroup at Eliane 10 and 12. Wounded are leaving the hospital to fight. They would rather die in action.
- Isabelle counterattacks and retakes part of strongpoint Wieme. All they find are rotting bodies, destroyed guns, and shell craters - there is nothing left. No troops are left there to hold it.
- 1400- The airdrop sends 12 tons into enemy lines and most of the rest where it can't be recovered.

### 3 May 1954

- More rain.
- 0135 -Drop of the 1st Colonial Parachute Battalion begins. **Could a battalion, a brigade or even one or two divisions change the inevitable?**
- Supply drop of 53 tons - 45 collected. The transport pilots had difficulty dropping into a shrinking perimeter while being shot at. The reaction on the ground was acerbic, and predictable.
- Continued offensive patrolling towards Ban Pa Pe - a bunker is blown up. But the digging below Eliane 2 has stopped, **an ominous sign.**
- Men in the trenches are up to their waists in water and fortifications are turning into collapsing mud- there is no drainage. Troops frantically try to dig drainage ditches. They work to the very end.
- The French Government has given Navarre orders that there will be no surrender at Dien Bien Phu.

### 4 May 1954

- 57 tons are dropped with a 40% loss rate. 125 men of the 1BPC parachute in.
- 0020- Huguette 4 came under very strong attack by a full regiment and four additional battalions of the 308th Division. CPT Jean Lucciani (1BEP) defended it with a mixed force of paras and Moroccans. Lucciani later stated, "There were 3,000 of them and 80 of us."
- 0200 - Troops of the 1BPC make their way to the CP, where they are besieged with questions about the Geneva negotiations, any relief or reinforcements. No answers.
- 0300 -The attacking Viet Minh commander panics and is sacked. Huguette 4 holds.
- 0335- "...a young Lieutenant from the Moroccan Platoon, apparently the last able bodied officer on the position, informed the CP by radio that there were still about 10 fighting men in the position but that the Viet Minh were penetrating his trench." he was shot down. Huguette 4 falls.
- 0600- Amazingly - a counterattack begins - 100 men against 2,000. They actually reached close to Huguette 4 and were driven back. 14 dead, 58 wounded. The hospital now holds 1,260 wounded.

## 5 May 1954

- There are enough artillery shells for one more day.
- 0005- 40 tons drop into the fortress.
- ① 0240- 74 more men of the 1BPC drop in. Captain de Bazin de Bazon arrives in a foul mood and a shell smashes his thigh a few hours later. Bigeard later commented, "It's better to be an optimist."
- ② 1100- the 1BPC relieves the weary 1/13 Legionnaires at the shattered Eliane 2. The stench of 1500 Viet Minh bodies ground into the hill beggars description. 1BPC inherits a problem: for days the Vietminh had been digging a shaft under Eliane 2, which could only for placement of a mine.
- Commanders discuss Operation Albatross, a GHQ breakout plan. Unfortunately, intelligence reports indicates that Giap has anticipated it and positioned troops.
- 1812 – A four hour artillery barrage hits the defenders.
- 2100- Cogne authorizes de Castries to break out if the situation warrants it.

## 6 May 1954

- 0412- The final 91 replacements parachute in.
- Early probes in the Elianes and Huguettes are easily driven back
- 1000- Around this time a C119 piloted by an American, James B. McGovern AKA "Earthquake McGoon" is shot down killing the crew - two American dead. His last transmission; "This is it son." McGoon flew 45 missions over Dien Bien Phu.
- Langlais called in commanders to discuss ammunition shortages; nothing dropped that day can be collected until nightfall. A message arrives from Hanoi HQ, the main Vietminh attack will take place that evening.

## 6 May 1954

The final defensive dispositions are:

1. Turret and the remnants of his 8th Shock hold Epervier (Sparrowhawk) & Dominique 4.
2. Major Guiraud and his Foreign Legion Paratroops hold Huguettes 1 and 3.
3. Major Nicholas holds Lily 1 and 2 with a group of Morrocans and Legionnaires.
4. Major Clemencon and Capt. Coldebouef hold Claudine.
5. Captain Charnod of the Air Force and Capt. Duluat hold Junon with the help of Lt. Redon's quad .50 machine guns.
6. Lt. Colonel Brechignac and Major Botella 5BPVN were based at the remaining Elianes.
7. Eliane 2 - Capt. Pouget 1BPC
8. Eliane 3 - Legionnaires and North Africans
9. Major Thomas- Eliane 10,11,12 - remnants of the 6BPC, T'ais, and Algerians
10. Colonel Lalande holds Isabelle

## 6 May 1954

- 1200- Russian "Katyusha" rockets are launched to herald the finale, with earth-shattering impact. They destroy the remaining depots, medical supplies, and ammunition. Fortifications at Claudine 5 are completely destroyed.
- 1730- Conventional artillery adds its weight. There is nothing the garrison can do.
- 1845 - 1,000 men of Regiment 102 - 308th Division attack Eliane 2, and are decimated by French artillery- a counter-barrage destroys eight of the remaining nine 105s and blankets the area with explosives. Isabelle receives a heavy barrage.
- 2200- Viet Minh attacks Eliane 10 and Eliane 4 with two regiments from the 312th and 316th Divisions. Artillery destroys Isabelle's remaining guns and ammunition.
- 2300- Foreign Legion Sappers (engineers) retake Claudine 5 is retaken from panicked Bo Doi. It's just a crater, but they hold it for 3 hours.
- The mine under Eliane 2 blows up with a dull thud. "Captaine Edme's 2nd Company disappeared, buried in the rubble, torn apart by the explosion itself, or stunned into total paralysis." Remnants of the 2nd Company holds fast, 5 to 10 men.



## End of Week 8 - 7 May 1954

- More rain.
- 0200- Claudine 5 falls.
- 0300- Major Thomas and 20 men hold the last bunker on Eliane 10 - A company from the 8th Assault fights its way in.
- 0330- Two small platoons of walking wounded under Lt. Weinberger also reinforce Eliane 10.
- Counterattacks by Brechignac and Botella manage to save Eliane 4.
- 0400- Lt. Pouget requests permission to abandon Eliane 2 for Eliane 3. His CO Vadot denies it, saying, "After all you are a paratrooper and you must resist to the death - or at least until morning."
- 0440- Eliane 2 falls. Rouget fires into his radio, went outside, and was knocked out by enemy grenades and taken prisoner.
- With the dawn the Air Force drops loads on friend and foe alike, so intertwined they were.

## 7 May 1954

- 0530- Eliane 4 - Brechignac, Cledic, Botella, Van Phu, Makoviak and others are holed up here for the last. They see the Viet Minh at Eliane 1 forming up for another attack.
- 0805- Attack on Elianes 4 and 10.
- Giap signals Vuong Van Thua (Commander 308th Division): "There are signs of confusion among the enemy ranks. They may surrender in numbers but they also may make a sudden attempt at breaking through. Give orders to your men to stick closely to the enemy and not let any of them escape."
- 0930- " Breche (Brechignac) calling Bruno (Bigearde) Its the end. Don't clobber us with [with artillery]. there are too many wounded here." "Dede (Botella) Calling Bruno. Its all over. They're at the CP. Goodby. Tell that guy Pierre [Langlais] we liked him alot." "I'm going to blow up the set," said the young voice on Eliane 4, and then the radio waves from Eliane carried for the last time the war cry of the French paratroopers: Hip-hip-hip-hurray!

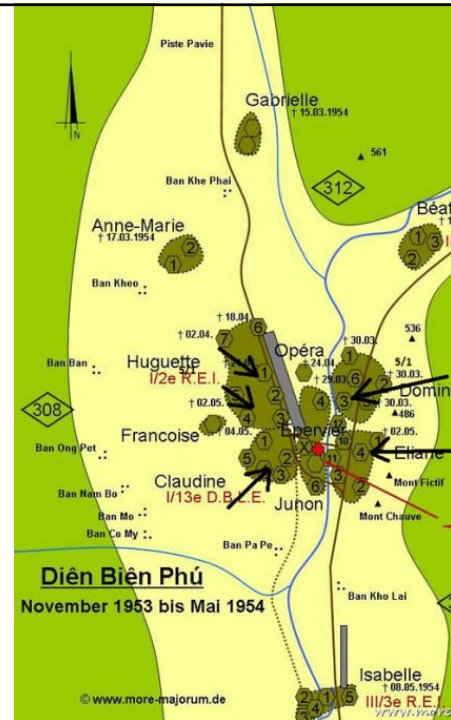
## 7 May 1954

- 1000 – de Castries reports to Cogny in Hanoi over the radio. In a high pitched halting voice he informs Cogny of the current situation. Cogny responds with laconic "oui's" as he is briefed. There is talk of a breakout - shelved. After talk about the wounded, they sign off. De Castries' voice faltered, and Cogny said, "Come - come, au revoir, Castries old boy." " Au revoir, General."
- 1030- Turret on Sparrowhawk is near the end.
- 1115 - More talk about the breakout codenamed "Albatross." De Castries is given discretion to execute, but it is too late. The only guns firing are the Quad .50s under Lt. Redon. They are effective to the last.
- Claudine 4 breaks - as many as possible are rushed to its defense.
- Rumours of a breakout attempt spreads and troops gather for it at Junon to break out to the west. Straws would be drawn - "winners" would head west into the jungle, while "losers" would head south as a decoy for the Viet Minh.
- 1200- An aerial photo dropped shows the route west blocked.



## 7 May 1954

- deCastries tells Lalande on Isabelle that he is free to attempt breakout to try to hook up with loyal T'ais.
- 1500- Moroccans on Eliane 3 panic.
- A meeting in de Castries bunker reaches a consensus that they cannot hold until nightfall. They decide on a cease fire at 1730.
- 1730 - The command bunker is taken.
- 1900- Isabelle destroys its equipment.
- 2200- A circling French aircraft picks up conversations in Vietnamese from Isabelle. When the operator tried to contact Isabelle, he was answered with "What do you want, monsieur?" from a Viet Minh.
- Isabelle's garrison tries to break out of the valley. Seventy troops, out of 1,700 ay Isabelle, managed to escape to Laos.



0150 hours, 8 May 1954

**"Sortie failed- Stop - can no longer  
communicate with you - stop and end."**

The final message.

## 1954 Calendar

### March

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 ①	15	16 ②	17 ③	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30 ④	31			

### April

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

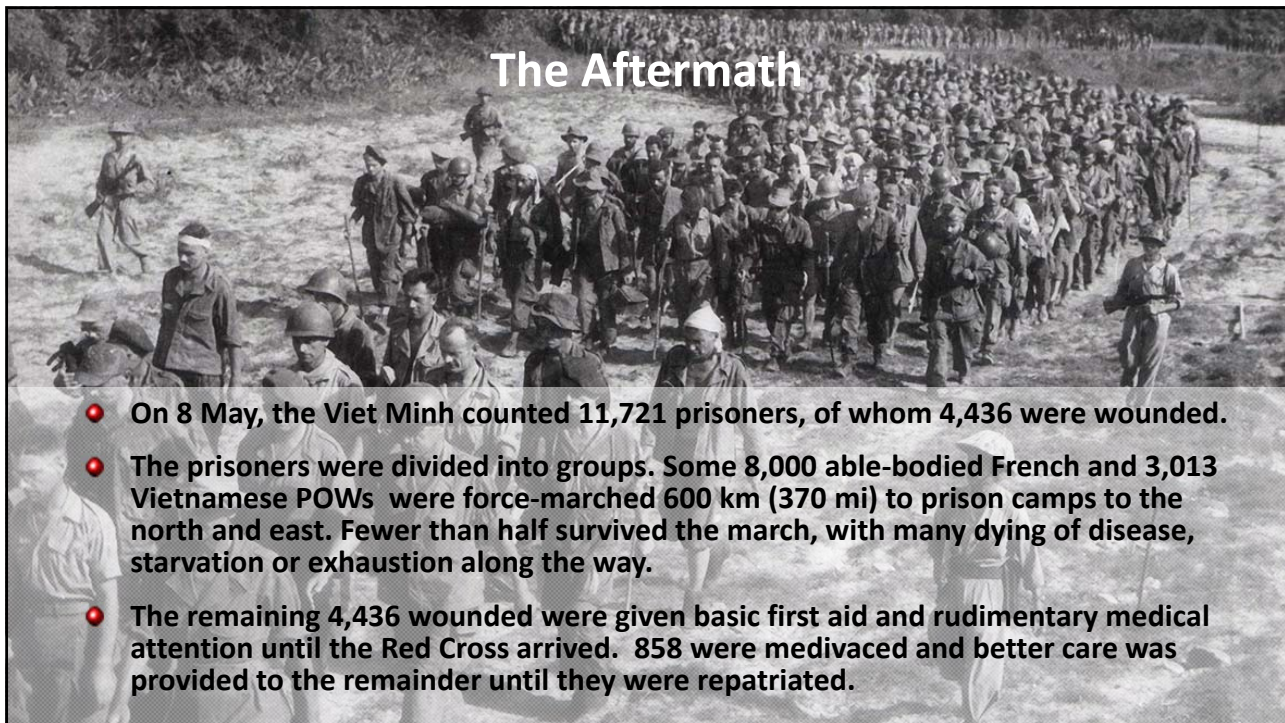
### May

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

1. Beatrice fell shortly after midnight.
2. Gabrielle attack 14/3 fell 16/3.
3. Anne-Marie fell 17/3
4. At 19:00 on 30 March, the Viet Minh 312th Division captured Dominique 1 and 2

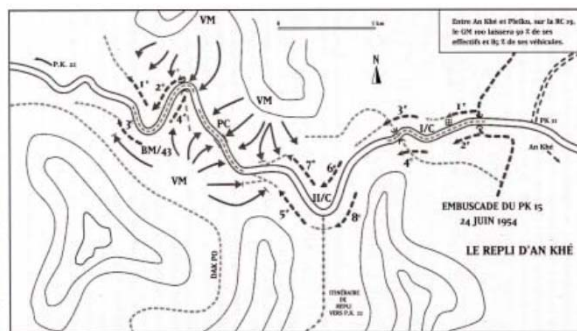
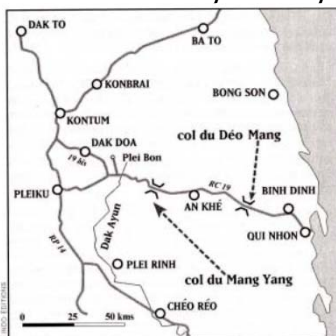
## Big Picture Lessons Learned

1. Understand the historical, political and cultural contexts for all parties.
2. Know your enemy and do not underestimate them.
3. Never assume that a guerrilla (asymmetric) opponent will play by your rules.
4. Beware of overdependence upon airpower or other technology.
5. Wars must ultimately be won by boots on the ground (cost in blood).
6. Consider the positive and negative factors of any combat environment.
7. Ensure that military involvement has both government and public support.
8. Be prepared to admit mistakes and adjust strategies.
9. Conventional military leadership, structures, strategies and tactics are ill suited for unconventional wars.
10. A defensive strategy and mindset is not conducive to victory.



## Battle of Mang Yang Pass, 24-29 June 1954

- One month after Điện Biên Phủ, the elite 2,000 man composite Groupe Mobile 100 (GM100) of the French Union forces evacuated the An Khê outpost. It was ambushed by the Viet Minh 803<sup>rd</sup> Regiment at the Battle of Mang Yang Pass and virtually destroyed.



- At the same time, Giap launched some offensives against the delta, but they all failed.

## Official Repatriation

- Only 3,290 Dien Bien Phu POWs were officially repatriated by 9 September 1954, four months later. The number of French Expeditionary Corps soldiers listed as “missing or failed to return from captivity” when the last French forces pulled out of North Vietnam in 1955 totaled 8,746, of whom 2,995 were French citizens.



## The Geneva Conference, 8 May-20 July 1954

- The Geneva Conference opened on 8 May 1954, the day after the surrender of the garrison. Ho Chi Minh entered the conference on the opening day with the news of his troops' victory in the headlines.
- The resulting agreement temporarily partitioned Vietnam into two zones: the North was administered by the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam while the South was administered by the French-supported State of Vietnam. The last units of the French Union forces withdrew from Indochina in 1956.
- The partition was supposed to be temporary, and the two zones were meant to be reunited through national elections in July 1956.

## Terms

The accords, which were issued on July 21, 1954, set out the following terms in relation to Vietnam:

- a "provisional military demarcation line" running approximately along the 17th Parallel "on either side of which the forces of the two parties shall be regrouped after their withdrawal".
- a 3 miles (4.8 km) wide demilitarized zone on each side of the demarcation line
- French Union forces to regroup to the south of the line and Viet Minh to the north
- free movement of the population between the zone for three hundred days
- neither zone to join any military alliance or seek military reinforcement
- establishment of the International Control Commission, comprising Canada, Poland and India as chair, to monitor the ceasefire

## Aftermath

- The French withdrew from Vietnam as of April 28, 1956.
- North Vietnamese, especially Catholics, intellectuals, business people, land owners, anti-communist democrats, and members of the middle-class moved south. The ICC reported that at least 892,876 North Vietnamese were processed through official refugee stations. Journalists recounted that as many as 2 million more might have fled without the presence of Viet Minh soldiers, who frequently beat and occasionally killed those who refused to turn back.
- At the same time, 52,000 people from the South went North, mostly Viet Minh members and their families.
- North Vietnam immediately violated the Geneva Accords by failing to withdraw all Viet Minh troops from South Vietnam, stifling the movement of North Vietnamese refugees, and conducting a military buildup that more than doubled the number of armed divisions in the North Vietnamese army.
- The South Vietnamese army was reduced by 20,000 men.

## Võ Nguyên Giáp (1911-2013)



- Born into an impoverished Mandarin family, Giap was a history teacher by profession, He graduated from the University of Hanoi with a doctorate in economics. His father had studied the Mandarin classics, and his son showed a mandarin influence in his writing.
- Giap was meticulous and cautious in his planning, and this led to an underestimation of his talent. However, when ready he struck hard and was ruthless in his expenditure of men.
- "Giap always was at his best when he was moving men and supplies around a battlefield, far faster than his foes had any right to expect."
- "Associates also have described him as forceful, arrogant, impatient and dogmatic. At least in earlier years, he was ruthlessly ambitious and extraordinarily energetic, with a touch of vanity suggesting to interviewers that he should be considered an Asian Napoleon. He is said to be fiercely loyal to those of his political faction who grant him unreserved loyalty."

# Kết thúc.

Đó là tất cả, đồng chí.