

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS SEVENTH AIR FORCE (PACAF) APO SAN FRANCISCO 96307

MSL (4240)

8 DEC 1966

Combat After Action Report

377th CSG (BSL)

1. Because of the broad interest resulting from the 4-5 Dec 66 attack on Tan Son Must, this headquarters has received several requests for copies of subject report. AFISP has requested a copy of the report and has asked that it be expedited.

2. In view of the above, request that this beadquarters be provided with 10 copies of subject report. Although expedious action is requested we do not wish to sacrifice quality for speed. This headquarters is aware of the many difficulties involved in reconstructing the attack particularly in view of the time span over which it occurred. If you desire assistance, please advise.

3. Request that every effort be made to beat the 25 Dec 66 suspense date as established by MACVD 335-8/7AFSUP 1

FOR THE COMMANDER

SIGNED

FRANCIS E. WILKIE, Lt Colonel, USAF Director of Security and Law Enforcement Cy to: PACAF (IGSL)
USAF (AFISP)

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS SEVENTH AIR FORCE (PACAF) APO SAN FRANCISCO 96307

REPLY TO ATTN OF: IGSS

1 7 MAY 1967

Combat Operations After Actions Report, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, 4 Dec 66, RCS: MACV J3-32 (Your Ltr, 12 May 1967)

TO: CINCPACAF (IGS)

1. Attached is a copy of the subject report as requested.

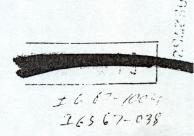
2. This letter contains no classified information.

FOR THE COMMANDER

WILLIAM D. MYERS, Lt Colonel, USAF Deputy Director of Security Police

l Atch
377 Cmbt Spt Gp (BSP)(S-NOFORN)
Ltr, lcy, 25 Dec 1966, Combat
Operations After Actions Report,
TSN AB, RVN, 4 Dec 1966, RCS: MACV
J3-32 (U), w/6 Atch; Atch 1, Map
of TSN AB with Key (C), lcy, Atch
2, Detail "A" to atch 1 (C), lcy,
Atch 3, Map, Saigon & TSN AB, (C)
lcy, Atch 4, Map TSN AB Canine areas
(U), Atch 5, Diagram, Damaged Aircraft parking positions (S) lcy,
Atch 6, Photographs (U)

ELLASSISTES



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS 377TH COMBAT SUPPORT GROUP (PACAF) APO SAN FRANCISCO 96307

REPLY TO ATTN OF: BSL (3141)

25 December 1966

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Actions Report, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, 4

December 1966, RCS: MACV J3-32 (U)

TO: Commander

U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

Attn: J343

APO San Francisco 96243

THRU: 7AF (IGSL)

- 1. (U) Name or Identity and/or Type of Operation: Combined mortar and sapper penetration attack against Tan Son Nhut Air Base.
- 2. (U) <u>Dates of Operation</u>: Time of mortar attack with accompanying penetration by assault unit: 0105-0315, 4 December 1966; search-and-destroy and counter-action continued until 1340, 5 December 1966.
- 3. (U) Location: Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon, Capital Military District, RVN.
- 4. (U) Control or Command Headquarters: Headquarters, Seventh Air Force (PACAF).

5. (U) Reporting Officer:

Commander	Unit
Colonel Grover K. Coe	377th Combat Support Group, TSN AB
Colonel James W. Graham	Special Troups, USARV, TSN AB
Colonel Joe B. Stocker	llth Avn Bn, Lia Khe AB
Colonel Robert W. Wood	Capital Avn Bn, TSN AB
Lt Col R. E. Gibson	4th ACS, Nha Trang AB
Lt Col Grove C. Johnson	377th Air Police Sq, TSN AB

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BSL-66096

ICS 67-038

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Lt Col Hugh H. Riddle

Provost arshal, HAC, Saigon

Major Huynh Minh Bon

33rd Group (VNAF) TSN AB

Capt Vo Van Khoa

83rd Special Gp (VNAF) TSN AB

Capt Vo Ngoc Su

53rd Regional Forces En (ARVN)TSN AB

Capt Ngo Van Trieu

2nd Service Bn (ARVN) TSN AB

6. (C)(GP-4) Task Organizations:

a. 377th Air Police Squadron (PACAF)

- (1) At approximately 2045 hours, 3 December 1966, maximum day-to-day security posture was reached with the posting of the 2000-0400 hours security flight. This was a force of 318 Air Policemen, consisting of 220 stationary/walking posts, 48 sentry-dog posts, 5 three-man primary Security Alert Teams (SATS), 5 three-man secondary SATS, 1 thirteen-man Quick Reaction Force (QRF), and CSC personnel including the Duty Officer and Flight Commander. In addition, Law Enforcement Section.had reached its normal daily 1930-0330 hours posture of 25 one-man stationary/walking posts, 6 two-man patrols, and supervisory personnel for a total of 43. A total of 361 Air Police personnel were in a duty status at the time of the attack.
- (2) The combined manning of Security and Law Enforcement sections at the time of the attack constituted 50% of the squadron present for duty strength. On 3-4 December 1966 the squadron was manned to 96% of its authorized strength and 98% of the assigned strength was present for duty; approximately 42% or 309 Air Policemen were available for emergency security duty. (q)
- (3) A significant factor not reflected in this strength recapitulation is that 49% of the assigned strength had been in RVN less than sixty days. Thirty-five percent, including key senior NCO's, had been in RVN thirty days or less. (q)

b. Special Troops, USARV

(1) By 0240 all five platoons (30 men each) of the U.S. Army Quick Reaction Force (TF-35), Special Troops, USARV, had reported to their assembly point where they came under the operational control of Central Security Control (Joint US Command Post). This response was automatic and in accordance with Joint US Forces Defense Plan 1-66.



Two platoons were dispatched to the Old Bomb Dump area where they took up defensive positions, one platoon remained in the assembly area as a reserve QRF and as security for the new POL tank farm. The remaining two platoons were deployed along a line west of and perpendicular to the 07/25 runway as a blocking force. Task Force 35 made light contact with VC flushed out of hiding by Air Police, but did not directly engage the enemy during this operation. It should be emphasized however, that without the support of TF-35 the capability of the Air Police to concentrate their principal effort upon the destruction of known enemy forces would have been gravely impaired.

7. (C)(GP-4) Supporting Forces:

a. US Air Force

(1) Detachment 4, 4th Air Commando Squadron, Bien Hoa Air Base, RVN. This detachment was on the scene in AC-47 Dragon ships within fifteen minutes of the attack. Flare ships ("Spooky") 41, 42, and 43 dropped a total of 490 flares from 0120 to 0650. No ordnance was expended. Again on 5 December 1966 this unit dropped a total of 196 flares from 0030 to 0635. (0)

b. US Army

- (1) Capital Aviation Battalion, Tan Son Nhut, RVN. The 120th Aviation Company of the parent battalion rendered immediate support with two UH-1B assault helicopter teams, each team consisting of two ships. The initial alert team was airborne in two minutes and moved toward suspected off-base VC mortar positions and their support base. This team was subsequently joined by the second team from the 120th Aviation Company and one team (Crossbow 36) from the 173rd Aviation Company, 11th Battalion, Lai Khe, RVN. These teams destroyed one building and damaged two adjacent buildings which the VC were using for shelter and destroyed one mortar position and two automatic weapons positions in the vicinity of coordinates XS 787.958. (See Atch 3). No body count was made on the scene. (SOURCE: G-2 Capital Military District.) One team provided on-call support to Air Police forces engaged on the west perimeter. This consisted of sweeping with automatic weapons fire the external area immediately adjacent to the entire western perimeter to harass and/or destroy VC attempting to enter/exit the base. These three teams also supported the Fifty-Third Regional Forces Battalion and the 30th Ranger Battalion (ARVN). (e)
- (a) These three teams flew a total of 15:15 hours, expended 1600 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition, 303 rounds of 2.75 rockets, and 1000 rounds of 40mm. (r)



(2) At 0121 the Air Police Desk Sergeant notified the 716th Military Police Battalion (Saigon) that Tan Son Nhut Air Base was under mortar and ground attack. Military Police patrols in the vicinity of the airbase were immediately reinforced by the dispatch of eight additional two man patrols and road blocks/check points were established on all avenues of approach to the air base. At 0137 a Military Police alert force (26 men) took up defensive positions on the scuthern perimeter of the base in the area of the main gate.

c. Republic of Vietnam Air Force:

- (1) The 83rd Special Group, VNAF, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN. This group scrambled two AlH's, code code name "Falcon Red", at 0137 on 4 December to assault the VC mortal position west of the base at XS 787.958. This team expended all ordnance on the suspected mortar position and huts near a factory complex being used by the VC as a sanctuary and aid station previously referred to in paragraph 7b(1), above. The team returned to base at 0330 hours.
- (2) 33rd Group, VNAF, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN. This group responded rapidly to provide flare illumination for ground forces outside the base and for the Air Police force inside the base. C-47 aircraft Bravo, Charlie, and Delta dropped a total of 273 flares from 0105 until 0630, 4 December 1966. On the evening of 4 December and the early morning hours of 5 December, Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta C-47 aircraft dropped a total of 423 flares between 0145 and 0630. (0)
- (3) 33rd Wing VNAF, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN. The 33rd Wing possesses six (6) light tanks and a number of heavy military trucks which mount either twin 20mm cannon or Cal. . 50 machine guns. The tanks are all located in fixed positions in the flight line area, and were not observed to take any actions contributory to base defense during the period of 4-6 December 1966. The large armed trucks normally carry a crew of three (3) VNAF personnel, and nightly patrol the outer perimeter roads or park with their guns covering approaches to the perimeter. During the early portion of the initial attack on 4 December 1966, two such trucks (each equipped with twin 20mm cannon) were patrolling the west perimeter road from 05l gate to 055 gate. These trucks were observed several times firing at random into dark areas in which no movement was reported or observed by Air Police in the vicinity. Some of these areas contained Air Police patrols. During the firefight between Air Police and VC forces on the west perimeter road, at 0235 hours, 4 December 1966, one of these trucks was caught on the edge of the VC attack and sustained minor small arms damage which apparently stopped the engine. All three VNAF crewmen abandoned the vehicle in the middle of the road and fled, leaving behind all their equipment including small arms. The second truck was



also in the area at the start of the engagement, moving north, and accelerated rapidly as the first shots were exchanged. On three separate occasions this vehicle almost collided with a jeep containing two Air Police officers as it twice reversed direction before finally taking up a position in the middle of the road facing away from the firefight in progress farther south on the same road. The gunner manned his weapons, bringing them to bear on positions occupied by Air Police approximately 250-300 meters away. Seeing this, one of the Air Police officers ran to the gun truck and shouted to the gunner not to fire. When the officer indicated that the guns were trained on Air Police positions the three-man crew abandoned their vehicle and fled. In doing so, one crewman snatched an automatic weapon from the bed of the truck, discharging it in the process and narrowly missing the Air Police officer by a few feet. The crew member immediately dropped the weapon and fled. This gun-truck with the other disabled vehicles remained abandoned until approximately first light after 0630 hours. (Q)

d. Republic of Vietnam Army:

- (!) 53rd Regional Forces Battalion, ARVN. This unit dispatched a quick reaction force of approximately twenty men to the previously mentioned factory area to engage the VC and neutralize the mortar positions. While enroute this team was ambushed at approximately 0130 in the vicinity of XS 789, 963. Elements reached the factory area at approximately 0200, made contact with VC and requested reinforcements from Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area. (e)
- (2) 2nd Service Battalion, ARVN, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN.

 The 2nd Company of this battalion is responsible for defense of the west perimeter fence line of the air base. In addition to manning the twelve concrete bunkers which are on a line parallel with and adjacent to the west perimeter fence line, their personnel man the 051 and 055 gates, the former located at the south end of the west perimeter road, and the latter at the north end of the west perimeter road. The bunker closest to the VC point of penetration of the perimeter fence is located approximately 325 meters north of the 051 gate and 120 meters south of the point of penetration. The inability of the ARVN bunker guards to detect the VC force is attributed to the tall, dense vegetation in the area, darkness, and the fact that the penetration was carried out in a disciplined and orderly fashion calculated to reduce detection by ARVN/US personnel.

OUR POSITION WAS ON WAS ON FORD EAST.

SEE MY STATEMENT

(a) Subsequent to the initial penetration, a fire fight involving small arms, machine guns, and hand grenades broke cut in this same location between the VC force and the Air Police. The perimeter road was the point of demarcation between the two opposing forces with the VC force closer to the ARVN guard tower. During this fire fight ARVN personnel in the bunker failed to fire at the enemy, although they had a clear field of fire and were well within effective range (120 meters). This is the fire fight in which two Air Policement were killed in action. (See Atch 2) (b-2)

(b) 3rd Compan.

n. This company has responsibility for external defense of the western side of Tan Son Nhut Air Base. At 0205, 4 December, this company deployed outside the west perimeter as a blocking force to prevent entry or exit by an enemy force, and at 0315 this battalion sent reinforcements to the

alerts by those teams as well. The heavy growth of grass and shrubbery in the area penetrated by the VC was another factor seriously limiting the detection capability of the dogs, as the vegetation prevented the spread of scent on the slow moving breeze. All detection of Viet Cong within sentry dog areas of responsibility on the morning of 4 December was made by visual observations of the handlers, rather than by dog alerts. Conversely, on the evening of 4 December, sentry dogs were highly effective in detecting the presence of VC in several areas. This effectiveness is attributed to the fact that VC on the west side of the base were stationary (in hiding) or moving at a slow, cautious pace toward the west perimeter, while sentry dog teams were moving about their areas of responsibility in each of the four compass directions.

- f. Terrain Features: The terrain traversed by the VC penetration force from the point of entry is overgrown by dense vegetation and includes large areas of construction site preparation, predominately earth moving and excavation for a new runway and drainage system. For the initial 750 meters their route was through thick, tall grass and bushes. The remaining portion of their route to the active runway was through a construction zone, intersected by drainage canals (10m x 6m) and high mounds of earth (7m x 4m). These features afforded the enemy excellent cover and concealment while approaching the runway. From the new runway construction area to the Mail Line of Resistance the terrain is devoid of obstacles, although the grass between the south side of the 07/25 runway and the MLR concertina barrier is sufficiently tall to offer concealment under the illumination conditions then prevailing.
- 9. (U) Mission: Omitted IAW MACVD 335-8/7AF Sup 1, para 9.
- 10. (U) Concept of Operation: Omitted IAW MACVD 335-8/7AF Sup 1, para 10.



11. (S) (Gp-3) Execution:

- a. Phase I . 0110 1000, 4 December 1966.
- (1) The initial alarm that VC had penetrated the base came via radio at 0110 when the sentry dog handler on post Alpha K-19, an area immediately to the north of the 07/25 runway, advised Central Security Control (CSC) that unidentified individuals were on the north side of his post. The Alpha Sector Primary SAT was dispatched to AK-19 to investigate the report and support the sentry dog team. Explosions and small arms fire began immediately after this, and CSC ordered execution of 377th Air Police Squadron Regulation 207-4, "Security Rapid Reaction Plan''. (See paragraph 6d, above). (b-1) Almost simultaneously, at 0114, post Delta 15, an MLR bunker, reported that VC were coming through the Delta Sector MLR and that after firing at this group his weapon had jammed. This element of the Viet Cong assault force, estimated to number eight or nine, entered Taxi-way West-7 (W-7) from between concrete revetments No. 7 and No. 8, which contained RF-101 aircraft. (b-1) Concurrently, with the penetration of the MLR at Delta 15, another group consisting of at least thirteen VC crossed the 07/25 runway and attempted to proceed to the aircraft parking area via taxiway West Five (W-5). This latter element moved into the field of fire of post Delta 11, one of two M-60 machine gun bunkers on the Delta Sector MLR. The machine-gunner posted at Delta 11 is credited with nine VC dead, and two Air Policemen with him in that bunker, firing M-16s, are credited with killing the remaining four, three of whom attempted to out-flank the bunker and silence it from the rear (See Atch 1). As no VC were encountered by guards directly behind Delta 11, and no VC were observed successfully passing this post, it is assumed that either the entire group of VC was killed, or that any survivors fled north before being sighted by the Air Policemen on the MLR. While proceeding toward the machine gun bunker, the VC fired at least two B-40 anti-tank grenades (Chicom type 56, USSR Model, RPG-2) at the concrete revetments. One was fired perpendicular to revetment number 10, and the other was fired at an angle at revetment number 9. Neither grenade penetrated the full thickness of the concrete, but each penetrated 1 meter into the cement.
- (2) Reconstruction of VC activity in the aircraft parking area by interviewing witnesses and by surveying the scene suggests that no member of the assualt element succeeded in passing post Delta 11 at West Five taxiway. The group which penetrated the MLR breached the concertina wire by cutting a strand in the bottom tier, separating the coils with their hands, and crawling through. After passing between Revetments



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No. ? and 8 they stopped beside a pick-up truck which they used as cover while surveying the area. All except one continued south into the C-47 and helicopter parking area. At this time CSC was informed that VC were in the C-47/helicopter area and that Air Policemen posted as closein security guards were firing on them. An MD-3 power unit parked adjacent to an RF-101C in revetment Number 7 exploded in flame and the fire soon engulfed a major portion of the aircraft. It was initially assumed that this revetment had sustained a direct hit by a motar; subsequent investigation, however, indicates that the explosion was in all probability caused by a grenade. One or more Viet Cong with this group raked a 180-degree area with automatic weapon fire while tossing handgrenades into the C-47/helicopter parking area. There were several large explosions at this time as fuel cells on one helicopter erupted; and grenades or 60mm mortar shells found other aircraft targets. The one VC who broke off from the main body proceeded south-west, down taxiway W-7, tossing hand grenades into unoccupied sand-bag personnel shelters. Before he could grenade an occupied bunker, the VC was killed by an Air Policeman armed with a shotgun.

- (a) VC within the C-47/helicopter ramp-area halted their eastward movement several meters west of the ARMCO RF-4C revetments, hesitated, and then withdrew, retracing their entry route at 0140. Their hesitation may have been due to the heavy fire they were drawing at the time, and the resistance they would have to overcome to gain entry into the revetments. One Air Policeman at this location was firing tracer rounds from his M-16 which the VC may have mistaken for a machine gun.
- (3) Throughout this time explosions were occurring sporadically within areas in which USAF helicopters, C-47s and USN aircraft were parked. The Counter-Mortar Radar Unit (CMR) reported at 0115 to TSN/SA a mortar position firing toward the base from XS 8185/98580, a location approximately 150 meters north-west of the 055 gate. An ARVN 105mm Howitzer positioned on Tan Son Nhut fired twenty-one rounds at this location. At 0315 the CMR unit plotted a mortar location at XS 791.985, approximately 100 meters north of the Vinatexco Textile Mill west of the base. (s) Assault helicopters of the 120th Aviation Battalion and VNAF A-1Hs were directed to this target. Elements of the 53rd RF Bn were enroute to the area when they were ambushed by the VC in the vicinity of coordinate XS 787/963 where two men were KIA and the reaction force scattered. The US Army Advisor to this unit reported to TSN/SA that while enroute to the factory location this force had been pursued by VC. Elements of the 53rd Bn did reach the factory area by 0200. (e)



(4) On Tan Son Nhut, a number of fire-ights occurbetween Air Police and elements of the VC force. Alpha Sector Primary SAT, which had responded to Alpha K-19's distress call (paragraph 10a(1), above), notified CSC at 0118 that his vehicle (M-151 jeep) had been hit by a mortar or grenade, and that he was wounded. (NOTE: Later investigation indicated that a tire of the vehicle had been struck by a fragment from an anti-tank grenade. However, the tail fin assembly of a Chicom 60mm mortar round was later found in this area, but in such a position that it could not have been the missile which struck the jeep. This was one of several mortar rounds fired at the deployed SAT by the mortar position on the west side of AK-15.) At 0140 Alpha Post K-33 reported that he was in the ditch on his post, that there were VC in the ditch, and he was pursuing them. At this point the pattern of alarms raised by sentry dog handlers who had made visual sightings of VC, indicated the retreat route taken by the VC withdrawing from the aircraft parking area. A blocking force of approximately 50 Air Policemen was deployed along the perimeter road which connects the 051 gate to the west ramp. A second force of approximately 50 Air Policemen was deployed facing north along the east-west inner perimeter road which runs east from the west perimeter road to the new runway construction area. A third force of approximately 100 Air Policemen, were deployed south-to-north along the west perimeter road from the inner perimeter road to a point 90 meters south of the Ba Queo Receiver Site. (See Atch 1) Shortly before the arrival of this third group, a jeep patrol posting personnel from south to north on this west perimeter road had stopped after posting the last man. At this time one VC darted out of the bushes from the south and ran for the perimeter fence. As he passed the jeep he dropped a concussion grenade at the feet of one Air Policeman who had dived in the ditch. No injuries were sustained by Air Police personnel. WE APPIVED OF APPROX 0115, WITHIN

(5) The third group of Air Policemen deployed on the west perimeter road was in place by 0210. Unknown to them at this time their position directly blocked the entry-escape route of the VC. Two 1 1/2 ton trucks and one 1/2 ton pick-up truck were located on the road in front of their position. About fifteen minutes after their arrival heavy fire from small arms, automatic weapons, rocket launchers, and hand grenades was directed against them from the west side of the road in the vicinity of the perimeter fence. This was the most intense fire encountered in the entire operation. Two Chicom anti-tank grenades hit the pick-up truck, demolishing it. The two 1 1/2 ton trucks were destroyed by grenades. Air Police forces maintained their positions and returned fire.

5 MINUTES AFTER OUR ARRIVAL PIRMAN COLE AND RIDDLE WERE KILLED - ALL BUT 4 OF MY TEME WERE WOUNDED, WE STAYED AND HELD THE POSITION WATLL APPROX. 0930, I WAS THE LAST TO LEAVE AT 1100.

FIRE SUBSIDED AFTER DAYLIGHT. (1)

I discovered at daylight that the Waymore Mines were set up on And Leftish Detonators were in the mines, and lead wires were laying in the grass Not connected

(6) The fire fi continued until approximately 0235 when VC fire subsided. Upon advancing in a search-and-destroy operation toward the enemy position, Air Policemen found the bodies of two Air Policemen, KIA, and two wounded Air Policemen were found on or adjacent to the road. Across the road, three dead VC were found, killed by small arms fire. (See Atch 2) One VC had a battery pack lying next to his body, suggesting the presence of a "Claymore" mine. Such a mine was found in the weeded area next to the road with the mine pointed diagonally across the road toward the Air Police positions. (See Atch 6) It is hypothesized that the "Claymore" was intended to cover the escape of the VC force in the event of pursuit but that the VC assigned to detonate the device was killed in the fire-fight before he could find and connect lead wires to the "Claymore". There is reason to believe that this group of VC (the 1st Platoon, 1st Co., 6th Bn.), a reserve force according to interrogation reports described in paragraph 8b, entered the base, and later withdrew through the gap cut in the triple perimeter fence by the 2nd Platoon. Later contacts with VC attempting to escape were concentrated near this gap, and indicate it was both penetration route and escape route for the 2nd Platoon. As the Air Police had arrived and deployed directly across the approach to this gap only 15 minutes earlier, at a time when the area was well illuminated by air-dropped flares, it seems likely that elements of the 1st Platoon, in reserve outside the fence, observed the movement of the Air Police. They then apparently passed through the gap and launched a concentrated attack in an effort to re-secure the escape route of the 2nd Platoon. Failing in this, they retreated through the gap and either re-deployed or dispersed to avoid capture. The liklihood that these VC observed the Air Police deploying severely limits the credibility of one theory that this action was an unintentional encounter with Air Police forces by a second, follow-on assault force. This observation is supported by the lack of satchel charges, blocks of explosives and similar munitions on bodies recovered from this action; whereas VC killed in the interior of the base were well supplied with demolition devices.

(7) While the engagement discussed above was in progress, action was continuing in other areas. At 0220 Alpha Post K-33 reported he was hit and wounded, but was pursuing the enemy. This sentry dog handler observed a six-man mortar squad near the west side of Alpha Post K-15. He testified later that he observed the mortar being fired toward the aircraft parking areas. When he proceeded to within 175 meters of the mortar position he took cover and began firing on the mortar crew. The enemy returned small arms fire, but ceased their activity. Despite sustaining a wound below his eye and through his ear, he maintained radio contact with CSC report-



The mortar team was last observed moving ing the enemy movel ones. the mortar in a southerly direction toward the flight line where its second position, 350 meters north of the active runway, was identified later that morning. (See Atch 1 and 6) At this second location, five US 60mm mortar shells, two of which had been fused, along with a food tin, several empty 60mm mortar shipping casings, discarded increments and a few separate fuses, were found. (M-3) The base plate for this mortar was found and turned over to an Air Policeman by a civilian RMK worker, several days later. The identity of the civilian (an American) has not been established and the precise location of the plate when found is unknown, although it was several meters from the rest of the equipment. The tube itself was not recovered despite extensive searches by EOD and Air Police personnel.

(8) Alpha Post K-20, (area in which referenced mortar was located) advised CSC at 0305 that VC were on his post. He advised that he was receiving fire and requested an ambulance for a sentry dog supervisor who was wounded. This was the last transmission from this handler. He was found KIA at 0415 by the Alpha K-21 sentry dog handler. At 0350, the Air Policeman on Alpha K-21 encountered VC heading west on his post. He engaged them and released his dog, which was wounded by hostile fire. (b-3)

THIS IS WHEN I CAUGHT ASSAULT FORCE VL) TRYING TO ESCAPE IN THE

- (9) It was apparent by this time (approximately 0400) that the VC were withdrawing from action in an attempt to escape. A number of minor exchanges continued to occur throughout the remainder of the night between VC and Air Police.
- (RF) Bn and the Air Police during this early morning period. One of their helicopters. "Recorbect 35" the first support for the 53rd their helicopters. (10) The 120th Aviation Co. provided fire support for the 53rd Staline to harrass any VC in that area, and fired into the area through which the 1st Platoon had retreated. The result of this fire Other helicopter assault which the 1st Platoon had retreated. The result of this fire is unknown. Other helicopter assault teams placed the mortar position behind the Vinatexco factory under heavy fire; and provided effective support fire for the 53rd RF Bn., which was engaged with VC force after the ambush of their convoy mentioned in paragraph 7d(1).
 - (11) The US Army Advisor to the 53rd RF Bn. later stated that the 53rd was in direct contact with the VC force from about 0200 to 0215. It was reported to TSN/SA later that morning that losses of this unit (53rd) were: 3 KIA, 4 WIA, four carbines and two M-1 rifles lost. In the course of the morning, the 2nd Service Bn was directed to assist the 53rd by TSN/SA. (5)



- (12) At 0400 hours all Air Police activities were placed mas static or "hold" status. This action was intended to prevent indiscriminate firing, to clear certain area, to accurately locate all friendly forces, and to allow key personnel to regroup and reorganize as deemed necessary. Throughout the engagement E.O.D. personnel had been working closely with the Air Police to strip dead VC of weapons and munitions, to pick up "dud" ordnance, to check suspected booby traps, etc. (m)
- (13) Also at 0400 hours, E.O.D. teams began a systematic search of the flight line, aircraft and revetments. At 0445 hours the Law Enforcement Section made a comprehensive search of the cantonment area of the base. At the same time, E.O.D. made a search of all dining halls and the Airmen's, Officers', and N.C.O. Clubs. Each was found to be free of demolitions. Following this search, a thorough sweep was made of the runways, which were found to be safe. By daybreak the base was, for all practical purposes, fully operational apart from the west side where VC were known to be hiding among tombs, in old wells and in extremely dense undergrowth. The main runway (07/25) was opened at 0849 hours 4 December 1966 for normal aircraft operations. (k)
- (14) Not previously mentioned in this narrative was the highorder detonation which occurred at approximately 0230 in the southernmost revetment of the Old Bomb Dump, located in the north
 central portion of the base. Quantities of US Navy five-inch shells
 stored in "conex" containers were destroyed. It was initially assumed
 that this ammunition bunker sustained a direct hit by mortar shells.
 Later investigation by E.O.D., however, indicated that a satchel charge
 with sufficient explosive capability to detonate the five inch shells was
 probably used. This analysis appears correct in light of later developments in this same area involving large VC satchel charges. (i-3)
 (See para 10c(3)).
- one hour. It was correctly assumed that any Viet Cong still on the installation would make an effort to escape before daylight, and thus expose their positions. Accordingly, Air Police forces were retained in their positions as in paragraphs 10a(4) and 10a(5), to cover the most probable escape routes. At 0625, with the approach of first light, Air Police personnel on the west perimeter road, near the entry point used by the VC to penetrate the perimeter, sighted several VC in the field south of their positions. The VC were moving north toward the Air Police personnel immediately opened fire. The VC returned the fire

Topened firm with the A-H with the A-H with the ARVIN on The Truck.



there were 3 VC that oxe had a Was almi soldier ran up and Killey one I did save

seriously wounding one Air Policeman. A cover of small-arms fire was layed down by Air Police to permit the medical evacuation of the SUMPHORIZED wounded. Upon cessation of the covering fire two of the VC in the field waved their hands above the weeds indicating their desire to surrender. Several Air Policemen moved into the field and surrounded the VC while others stood by to provide a cover fire in the event of a ruse. Both POWs were wounded and were released to VNAF authorities. A sweep of the field in which they were captured disclosed two dead VC. A short time later two VC surrendered to Air Police near the west end of the 07/25 runway. (b-4) I didn't see these Z. Of

(16) While Air Police had no further contact with VC there was Let ore himcaptured or had escaped. A helicopter was requested to maintain aerial surveillance of the area, and upon arrival aerial surveillance of the area, and upon arrival of a US Army UH-1 at 0810 hours, a search-and-destroy operation was initiated. A sweep was made with an Air Police line formed perpendicular to the west perimeter road, moving north from the 051 gate to the large drainage canal north of the Ba Queo Receiver Site. The line of this sweep extended eastward 500 meters from the west perimeter road. Small arms fire was encountered by the sweep force in the heavily overgrown area east of the Ba Queo Receiver Site, but the NCO on the scene broke off contact and halted the sweep due to uncertainty as to the orgin of the fire and the possibility that he might direct fire on US Army personnel believed to be in the area. CSC could not immediately confirm the precise location of the Army personnel. When the sweep was resumed Air Police drew no further fire and found the area from which fire had come to be devoid of VC and US Army personnel. Renewed VC activity in the area of the sweep was to be encountered later that day, 4 December 1966; and all personnel involved in both morning and evening encounters are reasonably certain that the VC were in the area covered by the sweep at the time. Since they were able to completely conceal themselves despite a careful combing of the entire area in full daylight highlights the need to eliminate the almost unpenetrable cover afforded by the dense vegetation on this portion of the air base. Since they held their fire and allowed the Air Police to search around them free of harm illustrates convincingly the confidence the VC have in their ability to use available cover and concealment to best advantage.

T WAS 4 December 1966, at which time the total security force reverted from RELIEVED 1966 emergency to normal security posture. The last security force reverted from the continued until approximately 0920 hours 1100 - 1 WHS it appeared that remaining VC elements had been contained, Air Police PLONE IN THAT forces on the south side of the 07/25 runway were reduced to afford those Air Police scheduled to relieve the night shift an opportunity to eat and rest for several hours. Manning was still a first



resources in and around the aircraft parking area and observation of the suspected area of hidden VC.

- b. Phase II 1000 hours 4 Dec to 0630 hours 5 Dec 1966.
- (1) After 0920 hours 4 December 1966, activity on Tan Son Nhut Air Base was normal until approximately 2021 hours when Alpha Post K-34 detected a VC crossing his post and opened fire. This sentry dog post had been the scene of much of the morning's activities, and one on which several VC had been killed or captured, as well as the center of the area swept after sunrise. The post also covered the entry-escape route. The combination of these factors, with a confirmed VC sighting at 2021, indicated the start of an attempt by the remaining VC to withdraw by their original route. Simultaneously, the Primary Quick Reaction Team (QRT) was dispatched to cover the escape route and the squadron Security Reaction Plan was implemented. Additional Quick Reaction Forces (QRF's) were formed rapidly and dispatched to pre-selected lines from which they could halt attempts at escape by the VC. Beginning at 2100 hours a search-and-destroy operation was organized to sweep the affected area which extended from the west perimeter road to the north to the new runway construction on the south and from the drainage canal on the east to the inner perimeter road on the west. (c-8) The VC entry-escape route ran through this area. At 2145 hours two VC were taken under fire and killed by Air Police QRF personnel moving southward. A third previously undetected VC opened fire and was also killed. A lull in flare illumination at this time caused a momentary loss of contact with the VC. When flares ON FOOT, and again lighted the area, the sweep was resumed and a fourth VC was locally sighted and killed. This latter VC fell forward still clasping a hand with ammor grenade from which the pin had been pulled. When his body was checked and Hand- by EOD personnel, the grenade rolled from his hand, the handle released and the primer fuze activated. An EOD man immediately seized the missing grenade and threw it a safe distance away where it are missed Mest grenade and threw it a safe distance away where it exploded. Of the Gatian.

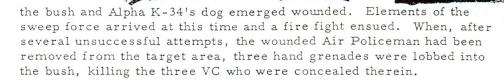
(2) One hour later at 2245, and approximately 275 meters due south, another element of the sweep force searching a nearly impenetrable thicket detected a VC when it had approached to within 1 meter of his hiding place. Simultaneously the VC opened fire which was returned by Air Police killing the VC.

(3) At 0029 hours 5 December the sentry dog team posted on Alpha K-34 detected and fired on a VC moving through that post. The VC dove into a bush pursued by the sentry dog. A second sentry dog team moved into the bush and discovered three VC. The handler withdrew at this time and was shot three times in the shoulder before he had covered more than 5 meters. Small arms fire was heard from



I Was IN

this area



- (4) The search operations continued with negative results until 0630 hours 5 December when they were terminated. A total of eight VC were killed in action and one Air Policeman was wounded in action. There is no doubt that the VC killed in this phase were survivors of the force that had penetrated the base perimeter in the early hours of 4 December. Their close proximity to the penetration route and the absence of any aggressive action unless detected clearly suggests that excape through the original entry point was their primary objective.
- (5) One factor which at times seriously hampered conduct of this operation was the inadequacy of illumination. Because of the large number of Air Police committed and the nature of the terrain which is extremely rough, intersected by deep drainage canals and high mounds of earth and covered in extensive areas by dense growths of brush and elephant grass, adequate illumination was absolutely essential to identification of friendly forces and to detection of concealed VC. The moon on 5 December was in the last quarter when it rose at 0021 hours and thus afforded no assistance. Flare illumination was clearly required, and was requested of the 33rd Group, VNAF. Extreme difficulty was experienced in obtaining this requested support, perhaps due to a committment of this unit to support ARVN operations off-base. Until C-47 flare ships of the 4th Air Commando Squadron, USAF, arrived over the base at 0030 hours, 95% of available illumination was provided by large quantities of M-127 illumination slap flares employed by the Air Police.
- (6) Equally serious and immediately detrimental to the conduct of the search-and-destroy operation was the interference of certain VNAF personnel with the established plan of operation. Despite the explicit instructions and prior objections of the Air Police officer on the scene, at 2220 hours, 5 December 1966, a contingent of VNAF personnel entered the area of the planned sweep in front of the Air Police lines. This obstructed the Air Police field of fire and prevented Air Police from continuing the operation which had already resulted in several firefights and five (5) VC KIA. At 2228 hours a second VNAF group also entered the search area in front of the Air Police positions. The presence of these groups halted all progress for approximately forty-five minutes. In addition, the actions of these two VNAF groups jeopardized the safety of Air Policemen around them for any contact



between VNAF and VC forces would have brought fire on one element or another of the sweep force regardless of the direction of fire. Both VNAF groups proceeded to search the area for VC bodies, which they stripped of all equipment and personal belongings, collecting all discarded equipment and material they encountered. Quite apart from the interference with the Air Police operation, this activity on the part of the Vietnamese deprived US forces of the opportunity to gain intelligence information from enemy bodies or equipment. The loss of this intelligence data has proven to be of considerable importance, as indicated by direct communication between Air Police Officers and US intelligence agencies. This interference with the Air Police was the most serious of a number of similar actions by VNAF personnel. VC killed or captured by Air Police were consistently stripped of all identification and equipment, although no Vietnamese support was evident during the killing and capturing. In those cases where VC bodies may have been booby-trapped or were loaded with sensitive munitions, scavenging was delayed until after USAF EOD personnel had secured grenades and demolition charges, and cleared weapons near the bodies.

- c. Phase III 0825 1030, 7 December 1966.
- (1) With the termination of the Phase II search-and-destroy operation, a force of 130 Air Police was assembled to conduct a repeat search of the west area of the base, taking advantage of the daylight. This search continued from 0825 until 1153 without incident or contact with the enemy.
- (2) At 1153 an Air Police observer posted on a 120 foot water tower located in the southwest portion of the base observed a VC moving south of the Old Bomb Dump area in the North Central part of the base. The sweep line was halted near this location and the primary Alpha SAT was dispatched to investigate. The observer directed the SAT to the VC position where he was located, engaged and killed. The search continued until 1340 without further contact or incident. Throughout the search all holes, gullys, culverts and bushes, were thoroughly checked. When a positive check was impractical or impossible, small arms fire and hand grenades were used to flush out possible VC.
- (3) At approximately 1400, 6 December 1966, US Army personnel entered their assigned ammunition bunker at the most southern point in the Old Bomb Dump and discovered satchel charges against the side of a conex box containing high explosives. (See Atch 6) An EOD team responded and cleared the area, removing the satchel charge which consisted of two blocks of plastic explosives bound together and covered with a plastic covering. In addition, two wooden boxes of high explosives and 9 1/2 blocks of Composition 3, all US manufactured, were found



secreted in the weeds adjacent to the same cones body. December at about 1030 a satchel charge was found in the next bunker to the northwest. In both instances the timer had not been set nor had the detonater been placed in the explosives. (9-3) The two revetments affected by these two findings of satchel charges are adjacent to the revetments blasted at 0230, 4 December 1966 (reference para 10a(14)).

- (4) Analysis of these events suggest that at least one, three-man VC team broke off from the 2nd Platoon following their entry to the base and proceeded to the bomb dump area with instructions to destroy three bunkers. The fact that no satchel charges of any kind were found on dead or captured VC tends to support this theory. There appears to be no satisfactory explanation, however, for the failure of the VC to detonate the second and third satchel charges.
- (5) This was the concluding incident related to the VC attack of 4 December 1966.





12. (S) (Gp-3) RESULTS:

- a. US and Free World Forces.
 - (1) Killed in action.
 - (a) USAF 3
 - (b) ARVN# 3 3
 - (2) Missing in action. None
 - (3) Wounded in action.
 - (a) USAF 15
 - (b) ARVN 4
 - (4) Aircraft destroyed. None
 - (5) Aircraft damaged.
 - (a) Major (Requiring depot level maintenance)

Type Se:	rial Number	Man Hours	Repair Cost	Sub-totall Total
RF-101C 56	6-080	1,900	\$ 4,200.00	
CH-3C 62	12579	135	10,500.00	
RC-47 42	-93166	600	2,680.00	\$17,380.00
	(b) Minor			
RF-4C 64	-1044	144	820.00	
RF-101C 5	6-182	288	6,755.00	5 - 15 % J. **
RF-101C 5	6-071	22	2,800.00	
CH-3C 65	-5695	16	3, 150.00	
CH-3C 62	-5692	150	1,400.00	
RB-57 55	-4237	366	11,500.00	
RB-57 55	-4264	96	2,800.00	
	-1046	24	5,250.00	
20				I6567-0

RC-47	43-48933	18	1,560.00		
RC-47	44-76668	16	3,500.00	•	
RC-47	43-48767	-11	2,800.00	\$42,335.00	(Air Force) \$59,715.00
NC-121J	131641	40	120.00*		
NC-121J	131655	10	30.00*		
SP-2H	140452	85	255.00*		
SP-2H	147968	85	255.00*		
SP-2H	141236	85	255.00*		
SP-2H	141249	1,200	3,600.00*	_	(USN) \$ 4,515.00
	TOTALS	5,290			\$64,230.00

(*NOTE: Dollar computation of damaged US Navy aircraft is based upon estimated number of man-hours to repair only and does not include cost of materials). (SOURCE: p, v, w)

- (6) Facilities/material damaged/destroyed.
 - (a) MD-3 Engine Driven Generator Set, 100% destroyed.Cost factor is \$15,650.00 (w)
 - (b) MA-1A Gas Turbine Compressor, 15% destroyed. 144 man hours to repair at a cost of \$1,025.00 (w)
 - (c) Air Police Vehicles.
 - 1. 65B8560, 11/2 ton, 65% destroyed
 - 2. 65B8525, Pickup, 40% destroyed
 - 3. 65B8552, 11/2 ton, 100% destroyed
 - 4. 65B8509, Pickup, 100% destroyed
 - 5. 65B8512, Pickup, 100% destroyed
 - (d) Weapons (Air Police).
 - 1. M-16, 5.56MM, Rifle 100% damage



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- 2. M-16, 5.56MM, Rifle Repairable
- 3. M-16, 5.56MM, Rifle Repairable
- 4. M-16, 5.56MM, Rifle Unknown
- (e) Radios (Air Police).
 - One (1) Motorola U43 HHT 1130E mobile radio unit with accessories. 100% destroyed.
 - 2. One (1) Motorola Portable Handy-Talkie.
- (f) Miscellaneous.
 - 1. One (1) each pair Cannon Binoculars, 7 X 50.
 - 2. Very minor Structural damage from shock.

NOTE: Items in Para (d) $\underline{4}$, (e) $\underline{2}$, and (f) $\underline{1}$ were lost in action.

b. Enemy.

- (1) Killed in action (KBG, TAN SON NHUT AB).
 - 28
- (2) Captured. 4 (Wounded. 3)
- (3) Equipment and Materiel losses.
 - (a). Weapons.

Number	Type
8	SKS Carbines (Chicom Ttype 56, 7.62MM)
5	AK Submachine guns (Chicom type 56, 7.62 MM assualt rifle)
4	VC Type B-40 Anti-tank grenade launchers (Chicom type 56, USSR Model)
2	US M-79 grenade launchers
1	CKC Rifle
1	Machine Pistol (Chicom type 50, 7.62MM)



(b) Munitions

Number	Type
1	VC type 7Kg Directional Mine (Claymore)
10	VC type B-40 Anti-tank grenades (Chicom type 56, USSR Model RPG-2) with eight propellant charges.
10	Bangalore Torpedoes
6	US 60MM Mortar rounds with 5 fuses
2	Chicom RKG-3T Anti-tank grenades (USSR Model RKG-3)
2	Chicom type 1/M-33 Frag grenades
5	Chicom type M-32 Frag grenades
41	VC Homemade blast grenades (Resembles OD Pork and Beans Can)
44	VC Stick type blast grenades
35	US 40MM rifle grenades (All removed from VC KIA)
2	US M-26 Frag grenades (dud fired)
1	US Mk III offensive grenade (Removed from VC KIA)
6	9MM small arms clips-approximately 40 rds/clip
41	7.62 small arms clips-approximately 30 rds/clip
130	9MM loose rounds (approximated)
260	8.62MM loose rounds (approximated)
	(SOURCE: g and t)

