



VETERANS OF TAN SON NHUT
377TH SECURITY POLICE SQ
AIR FORCE OUTSTANDING
UNIT AWARD W/ COMBAT VALOR
4 - 5 DEC 1966
1 APR 1969 - 31 MAR 71
17 JAN 1972 - 28 MAR 1973
37th SECURITY POLICE SQ
PROVEN IN COMBAT

Attack On Tan Son Nhut Air Base

December 4-5, 1966

04 Dec 1966

0105-0315 hours: Mortar and Viet Cong penetration assault on Tan Son Nhut.

0105-0630 hours: Vietnamese Air Force drops 423 flares over Tan Son Nhut.

0110 hours: Alpha Kilo-19, sentry dog post radios that un-identified individuals were on the north side of his post. Explosions and small arms are heard.

0114 hours: Delta-15, Main Line of Resistance bunker reported that VC were coming through Delta Sector MLR. Reported that his weapon had jammed. VC enter taxiway West-7.

Thirteen (13) VC crossed the 07/25 runway and attempted to proceed to the aircraft parking area via taxiway West-5. This latter element moved into the field of fire of post Delta-11

which was 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 Policeman with him in that bunker, firing their M-16's are credited with killing the remaining four VC, three of whom attempted to out-flank the bunker and silence it from the rear.

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.

The other was fired at an angle at revetment number 99. Neither grenade penetrated the full thickness of the concrete but each penetrated 1 meter into the cement.

0118 hours: Alpha Sector Primary Security Alert Team (SAT), notified CSC that his vehicle (M-151 jeep) had been hit by a mortar or grenade and that he was wounded.

0121 hours: 377th Air Police Desk Sergeant notifies 716th MP BN, Saigon.

0130 hours: ARVN coming to assist Tan Son Nhut was ambushed in the Vicinity of XS-789963.

0137 hours: Military Police alert force (26 men) in defensive position southern perimeter near the main gate.

0137 hours: "Falcon Red," two VNAF A1H helicopter's assault VC mortar positions, west of base at XS-789958.

0140 hours: Alpha Post Kilo-33 reported that he was in the ditch on his post, that there were VC in the ditch and he was pursuing them.

0200 hours: ARVN make contact with the enemy at the Vinatexco Textile Mill.

0205 hours: ARVN deployed outside the west perimeter, as a blocking force.

0210 hours: Air Police deployed on the west perimeter was as a blocking force. Unknown to them at this time, their position directly blocked the entry - escape route of the VC.

0220 hours: Alpha Post Kilo-33 has 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 Kilo-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 before 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, reporting the enemy movements.

0230 hours: High explosive detonation in the southern most revetment of the Old Bomb Dump, located in the north central portion of the base.

Quantities of US Navy five inch shells stored in "connex" containers were destroyed. A satchel charge with sufficient explosive capability to detonate the five inch shell was probably used.

0235 hours: VNAF gun truck sustained minor small arms damage that stopped the engine.

0235 hours: VC firing 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 WIA Air Policemen were found on or adjacent to the road.

0305 hours: Alpha Post Kilo-20, advised CSC that VC were on his post. He advised that he was receiving fire and requested an ambulance for a sentry do supervisor who was wounded. This was the last transmission from this handler.

0315 hours: CMR unit plotted a mortar location at XS-791985, approximately 100 meters north of the Vinatexco Textile Mill, west of the base.

0330 hours: "Falcon Red," returned to base.

0350 hours: Alpha Kilo-21, encountered VC heading west on his post.

He engaged them and released his dog, which was wounded by hostile fire.

0400 hours: It is apparent that the VC are attempting to withdraw from base.

0400 hours: All Air Police activities were placed in a static or "hold" status. This action was needed to prevent indiscriminate firing, to clear certain areas, to accurately locate all friendly forces and to allow key personnel to regroup and reorganize as deemed necessary.

Throughout the engagement, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) 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.

0400 hours: EOD teams began a systematic search of the flight line, aircraft and revetments.

0415 hours: Alpha Kilo-21, found A1C George Michael Bevich Jr., KIA.

0445 hours: The Law Enforcement Section made a comprehensive search of the cantonment area of the base.

EOD made a search of all dining halls and the Airmen's Officer's and NCO Club's. Each found to be free of demolition.

0520 hours: ARVN begins sweep operation off post, west end.

0530 hours: No contact with VC for one hour.

0625 hours: Air Police located Several VC inside the perimeter, in the field. VC moving north toward the Air Police blocking element.

Air Police open fire. VC returned the fire seriously wounding one Air Policeman. A cover of small arms fire was layed down by Air Police to permit the medical evacuation of the 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.

Both POW's 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.

0634 hours: First light.

0657 hours: Sun Rise.

0810 hours: US Army Uh-1m a search-and-destroy operation was initiated.

0849 hours: The main runway, 07/25, was opened for normal aircraft operation.

0920 hours: The total security force reverted from emergency to normal security posture.

0920 - 2021 hours: Normal base activities.

0920 - 2021 hours: Alpha Post Kilo-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 combination of these factors, with a confirmed VC sighting at 2021 hours, indicated the start of an attempt by the remaining VC to withdraw by their original route.

2100 hours: Search-and Destroy operation was organized.

2145 hours: Two VC were taken under fire and killed by Air Police Quick Reaction Force (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 again lighted the area, the sweep was resumed and a fourth VC was sighted and killed. This latter VC fell forward still clasping a hand grenade from which the pin had been pulled.

When his body was checked by EOD personnel, the grenade rolled from his hand, the handle released the primer fuse activated. An EOD man immediately seized the grenade and threw it a safe distance away where it exploded.

2245 hours: Approximately 275 meters due south, another element of the sweeping force searching a nearly impenetrable thicket detected a VC when he approached to within 1 meter of his hiding place. Simultaneously the VC opened fire which was returned by Air Police, killing the VC.

05 Dec 1966

0021 hours: The moon was in the last quarter when it rose and thus afforded nor assistance. Terrain which is extremely rough, intersected by deep drainage canals and high mounds of earth, covered in extensive areas by dense growths of brush and elephant grass.

0029 hours: Sentry dog team posted on Alpha Kilo-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 the bush and Alpha Kilo-34's dog emerged wounded. Elements of the sweep force arrived at this time and a fire fight ensued.

When, after several unsuccessful attempts, the wounded Air Policeman had been removed from the target area, three hand grenades were lobbed into the bush, killing the three VC who were concealed therein.

0130 - 0630 hours: Search operations continued with negative results and terminated.

A total of eight VC were killed in action and one Air Policeman was wounded in action, on this date.

2200 hours: A contingent of VNAF personnel, entered the area of the planned sweep in front of the Air Police lines. This obstructed Air Police field of fire.

2228 hours: A second VNAF group also entered the search area in front of the Air Police positions.

0825 - 1153: Air Police was assembled to conduct a repeat search of the west area of the base, taking advantage of the daylight hours. No incident of contact with the enemy.

1153 hours: 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 observer directed the SAT to the VC position where he was located, engaged and killed.

1200 - 1340 hours: No further contact with the enemy.

1400 hours: 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 connex box containing high explosives.

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 connex box.

07 Dec 1966

1030 hours: A satchel charge was found in the next bunker to the northwest. In both instances, the timer had not been set nor had the detonator been placed in the explosives.

RESULTS:

KIA - 03 USAF Personnel

KIA - 03 ARVN Personnel

WIA - 15 USAF Personnel

WIA - 04 ARVN Personnel

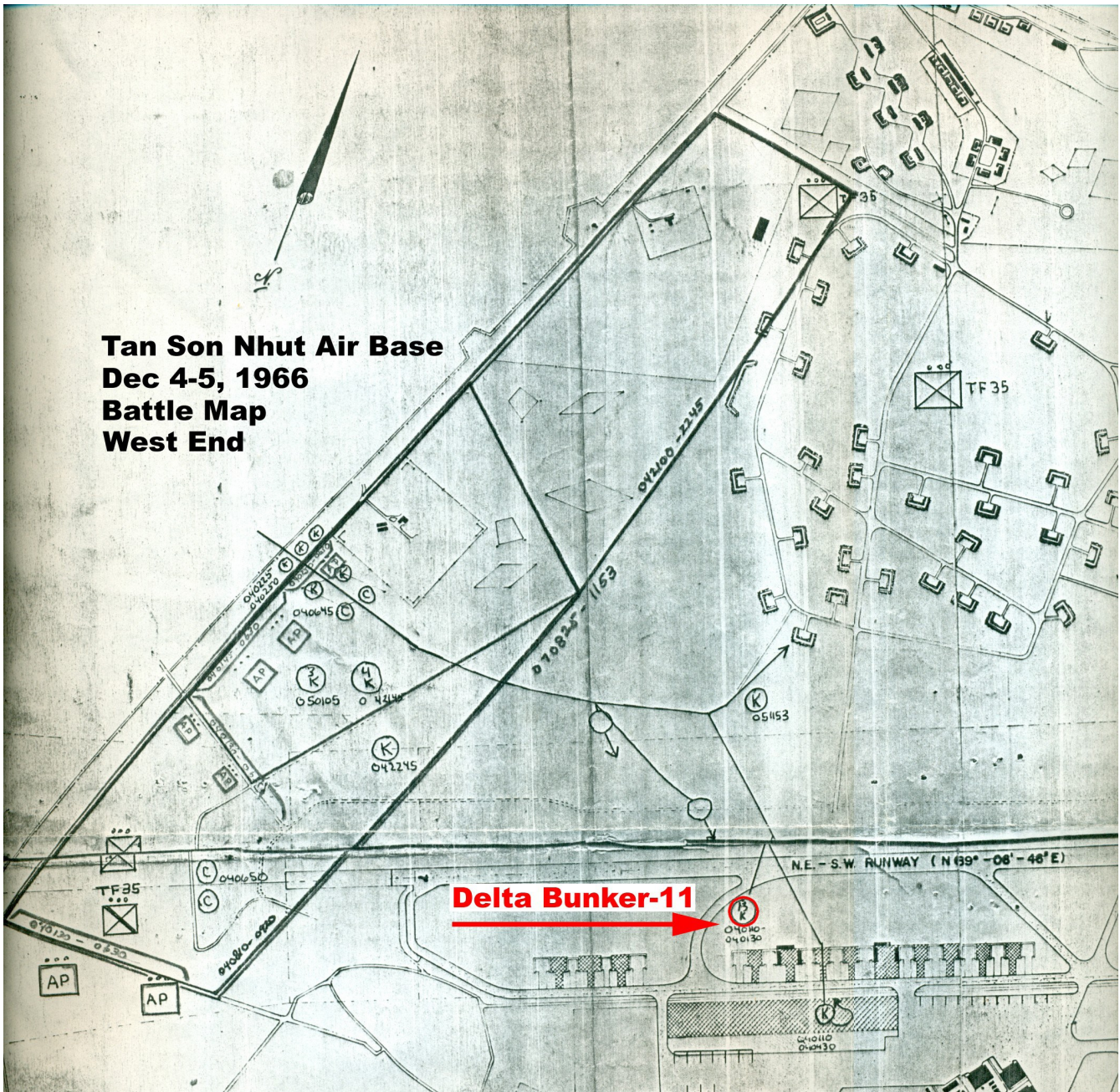
KIA - 28 VC Personnel

POW - 04 VC personnel of which three were wounded.

Author: Charles E. Penley



TANA "THANKS" the 377th APS.



Tan Son Nhut Battle Map, December 4-5, 1966
A2C Curie and A2C Poole's position.
13 Enemy KIA, was within 100 feet.

The below individuals were KIA:



A2C George Michael Bevich
Worked Alpha Kilo-3

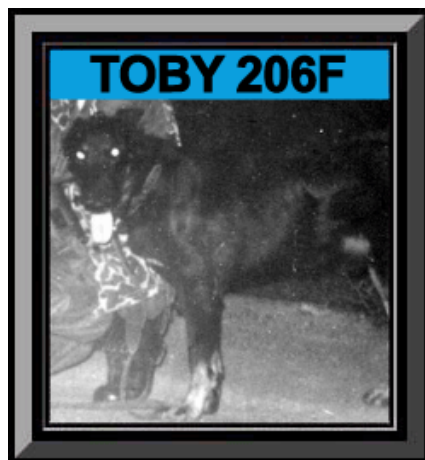


A2C John Matthew Cole

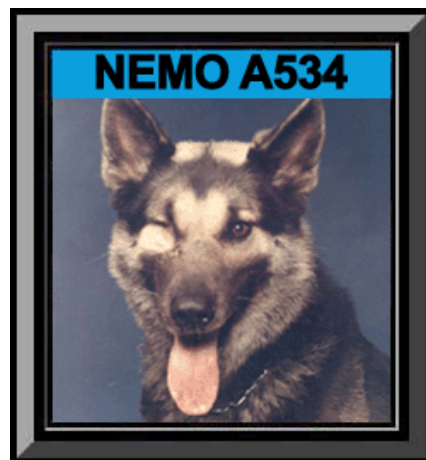


A2C Oliver John Riddle

The below sentry dogs were KIA:



The below sentry dog was WIA:





A2C Arrant, Wilbert B., Jr., wounded in action on 4 Dec 1966, is being presented the Purple Heart at U. S. Army 3rd Field Hospital by Col Grover K. Coe, Tan Son Nhut's Base Commander. (Dec 1966)



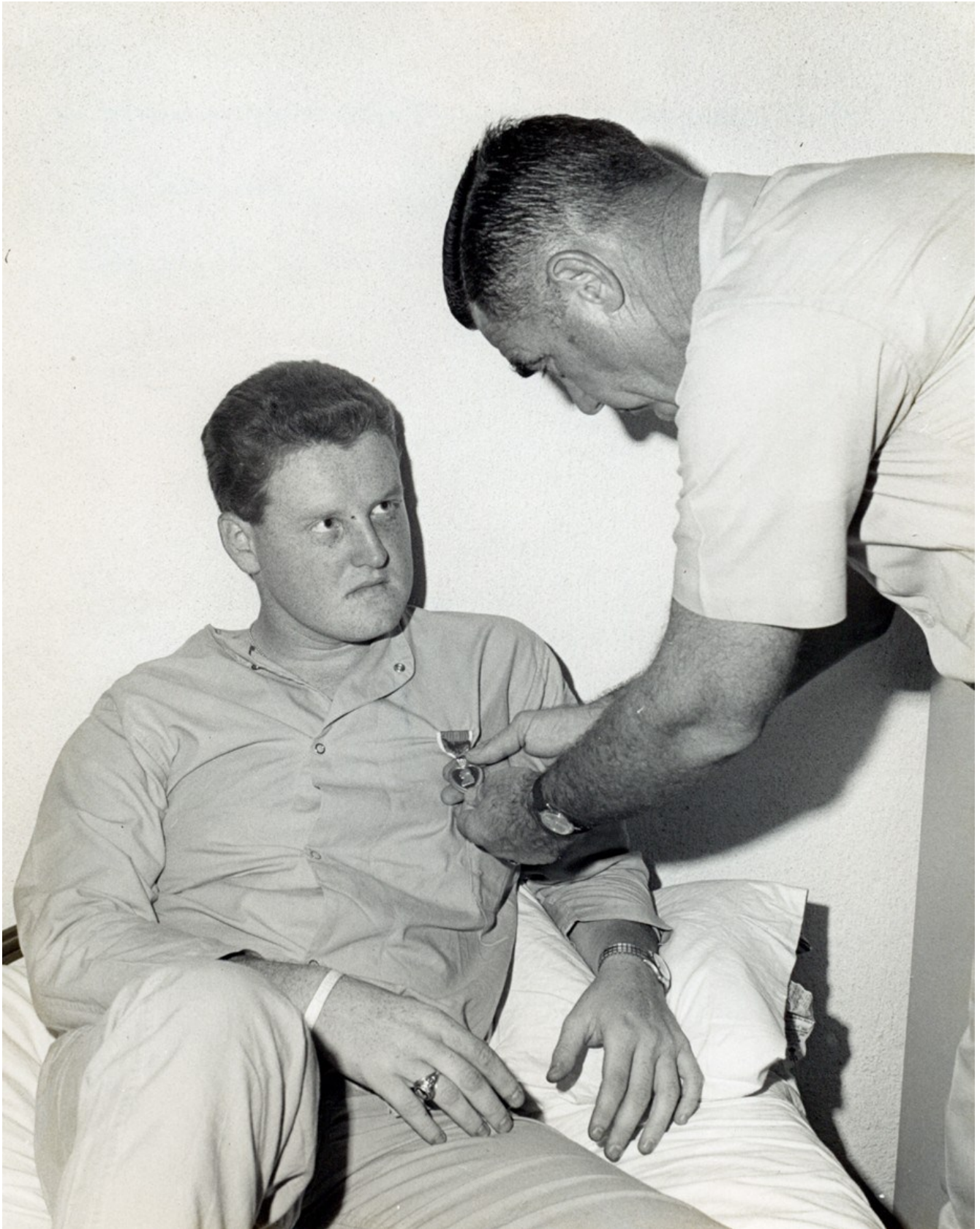
A2C Davis, Lyle K., wounded in action on 4 Dec 1966, is being presented the Purple Heart at U. S. Army 3rd Field Hospital by Col Grover K. Coe, Tan Son Nhut's Base Commander. (Dec 1966)



A2C Richard E. Gary, Sentry Dog Handler, handled RANGER 679E, is presented the Purple Heart Medal, from Lt Col Grove C. Johnson, Commander, 377th Air Police Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon, Vietnam. (Dec 1966)



SSgt Habecker, Barry L., wounded in action on 4 Dec 1966, is being presented the Purple Heart at U. S. Army 3rd Field Hospital by Col Grover K. Coe, Tan Son Nhut's Base Commander. (Dec 1966)



A2C Janiak, Thaddeus M., wounded in action on 4 Dec 1966, is being presented the Purple Heart at U. S. Army 3rd Field Hospital by Col Grover K. Coe, Tan Son Nhut's Base Commander. (Dec 1966)



A2C Poole, Tommy C., wounded in action on 4 Dec 1966, is being presented the Purple Heart at U. S. Army 3rd Field Hospital by Col Grover K. Coe, Tan Son Nhut's Base Commander. (Dec 1966)



A1C Shahan, Tommy N., wounded in action on 4 Dec 1966, is being presented the Purple Heart at U. S. Army 3rd Field Hospital by Col Grover K. Coe, Tan Son Nhut's Base Commander. (Dec 1966)



A2C Simmons, Russell., wounded in action on 4 Dec 1966, is being presented the Purple Heart at U. S. Army 3rd Field Hospital by Col Grover K. Coe, Tan Son Nhut's Base Commander. (Dec 1966)



A2C Throneburg, Robert A., wounded in action on 4 Dec 1966, is being presented the Purple Heart at U. S. Army 3rd Field Hospital by Col Grover K. Coe, Tan Son Nhut's Base Commander. (Dec 1966)

Sentry dog handler - handled NEMO A534



This is the drainage ditch through which the enemy made their way onto Tan Son Nhut Air Base, December 4-5, 1966.



Personnel of the 377th APS perform a search-and-destroy mission on Tan Son Nhut Air Base, December 4-5, 1966.



Some of the enemy's weapons that were captured during the Battle for Tan Son Nhut, December 4-5, 1966.



Some of the enemy's weapons that were captured during the Battle for Tan Son Nhut, December 4-5, 1966.



Some of the enemy's weapons that were captured during the Battle for Tan Son Nhut, December 4-5, 1966.



**LTC Grove C. Johnson
Commander, 377th SPS
Bronze Star, Meritorious**

**Died: July 26, 2007
Boynton Beach, Florida**

3 Silver Star Recipients



**A2C Alvin W. Curie
Delta Bunker-11**

**Died: December 7, 1983
Grand Rapids, Michigan**



**Capt W. C. Henry
Security Operations Officer**



**Maj Roger P. Fox
XO, 377th SPS**

**Died: December 14, 2000
Falls Church, Virginia**



**A2C Tommy C. Poole
Alpha Kilo Post 33-A**



**TSgt Olbert H. Hiatt
Training NCOIC**

**Died: November 20, 2001
Centre, Alabama**

377th SPS Recommendations

Silver Star

Maj Fox, Roger P., Operations Officer
A2C Cole, John D., West End, C Flt
A2C Bevich, George M., K-9 Section
A2C Poole, Tommy C., K-9 Section
A3C Curie, Alvin W., Delta-11

Group Bronze Star with Valor

1LT Howe, Jack S., Duty Officer, CSC
MSgt Ford, Marcus H., Security Opns
TSgt Hiatt, Olbert H., TDY Trng Sec
SSgt Cavanaugh, Eugene J. B Flt Sec
SSgt Jenkins, James L., A Flt Sec
A1C Yonki, Joseph R., Training Sec
A2C Hardway, Jacky A., A Flt Sec
A2C Brand, Robert L., C Flt Sec
A2C Mayhugh, Robert E., A Flt Sec
A2C Guerra, Jose G., C Flt Sec
A2C Janiak, Thaddeus M., B Flt LE
A2C Estep, Deverly A., A Flt Sec
A2C Riddle, Oliver J., A Flt Sec
A3C Dowdell, Stanford, A Flt Sec

Bronze Star with Valor

Capt Henry, William C., Sec Opns Off
Capt Hover, Fred W., Duty Off CSC
MSgt Babicky, Frank J., Sec Opns
MSgt Battoe, Edward, C Flt Sec
MSgt Hollenbeck, Ronald C. B Flt Sec
MSgt Robertson, Arving, A Flt Sec
TSgt Brooks, Roy D., C Flt Sec
TSgt Henson, Thomas, C Flt Sec
SSgt Habecker, Berry L., C Flt Sec
SSgt Walters, Robert P., B Flt Sec
A1C Bailey, Melvin, B Flt Sec
A1C Federson Roger A., B Flt Sec
A2C Casey, Patrick J., K-9 Sec
A2C Collins, Theodore A., C Flt Sec
A2C Dougherty, Jenfy J., B Flt LE
A2C Orr, Alfred J., K-9 Sec
A2C Ramirez, Frank, C Flt Sec
A2C Throneburg, Robert A., K-9 Sec
A2C Valentine, Robert W., C Flt, BP
A3C Blair, Carl G., C Flt Sec
A3C Seals, Timothy A., C Flt Sec
A3C Walker, John P., C Flt Sec

Group Bronze Star with Valor

SSgt Summerhayes, Gerald A., K-9
A1C Sidwell, Dale E., K-9 Sec
A1C Shahan, Tommy N., K-9 Sec

A2C Bernava, Richard N., K-9 Sec
A2C Handler, Thomas R., K-9 Sec
A2C Helderman, Marvin A., K-9 Sec
A2C Marsh, Leroy R., K-9 Sec
A2C Olden, David E., K-9 Sec
A2C Laudner, Larry G., K-9 Sec

Bronze Star Achievement

LTC Johnson, Grove C., Cdr 377th
TSgt Williams, Joseph F., C Flt Sec
SSgt Tomkis, Rodney G., C Flt Sec
A1C Starr, Charles R., C Flt Sec
A2C Reed, Monty C., C Flt Sec

Purple Heart

SSgt Copeland, Charlie, C Flt Sec
SSgt Habecker, Barry L., C Flt Sec
A1C Shahan, Tommy N., K-9 Sec
A1C Yonki, Joseph R., Training Sec
A2C Arrant, Wilbert B., A Flt Sec
A2C Barnhart, Keith J., A Flt Sec
A2C Gary, Richard E., K-9 Sec
A2C Hargis, Walter M., K-9 Sec
A2C Huggins, George W., C Flt Sec
A2C Janiak, Theddeus M., B Flt LE
A2C Lamie, James E., B Flt LE
A2C Otterman, Richard E., C Flt Sec
A2C Poole, Tommy C., K-9 Sec
A2C Throneburg, Robert A., K-9 Sec
A2C Simmons, Russell, K-9 Sec
A2C Davis, Lyle K., C Flt Sec

Total Type and Numerical Summary

Silver Star Medal	05
Bronze Star Medal (Valor)	45
Bronze Star Medal (Meritorious)	05
Purple Heart	16
Total	71

***** It must be noted that many of the recommendations listed above, might have been downgraded to another award.**

On the night of December 4-5, 1966, the men of the 377th Air Police Squadron, had a mission that had to be accomplished!

Professionalism was demonstrated by all air policemen who was there on those two eventful days!



“To Fight And To Win!”



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR FORCE OUTSTANDING UNIT AWARD

TO THE

377TH AIR POLICE SQUADRON

The 377th Air Police Squadron, Pacific Air Forces, distinguished itself by exceptionally meritorious service in support of military operations involving conflict with an opposing armed force on 4 and 5 December 1966. On these dates, the personnel of the 377th Air Police Squadron displayed extreme heroic valor against a Viet Cong infiltration force and the highest degree of professionalism in defense of Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, during a mortar attack on the base. The singularly distinctive accomplishments of the members of the 377th Air Police Squadron reflect great credit upon themselves and the United States Air Force.



