

## ***B-57 Explosion***

### ***Biên Hòa AB***

***May 16, 1965***



***Flight Ramp conflagration: 26 Dead, 105 Wounded!***

**by Chris Godfrey**

**34th APS/3rd SPS, Biên Hòa AB**

**4-2-65 to 3-31-66**

I was searching VSPA site for any information regarding casualties caused by accidents in 1965. I was looking for a information of a flight line incident that was caused when bomb ordnance was set incorrectly causing it to explode and a chain reaction ensued killing over 50 Air Force flight line and pilots besides many aircraft and the fuel dump ,I don't believe we lost any A.P.s at that time.

I had worked the flight line that evening before being relieved and had just retired to my bunk when the first explosion occurred. Have you heard of that incident? It was a major incident for Biên Hòa Is there anywhere I can search for that kind of information?

Thanks

Robert Etzler

VSPA Biên Hòa

Dec.1964-Dec.1965

Robert:

I believe your referring to the 5-16-65 incident which happened o/a 0825 hours A B-57 bomb laden U.S. Canberra accidentally caught fire which set off a chain reaction of exploding 250 LB and 500 LB bombs. Another version has it that a time-delay fuse on one of the bombs was set incorrectly and exploded. My notes from that time show ten B-57, one F-8 (USN) and several copters destroyed. 20 American bodies identified and 7 other Americans listed as missing. Total number of wounded stood at around 105.

In addition to the aircraft lost, we lost the fuel dumps, most all of the munitions on the ramps, the control tower, plus the parking ramp sustained numerous craters from the exploding munitions.

That afternoon a call went out for volunteers to search for wounded and others on the ramp. Several hours into the search we were ordered to clear the area due to bombs "cooking-off" and exploding. We resumed recovery operations the next day.

Chris Godfrey

34th APS/3rd SPS, Biên Hòa AB

4-2-65 to 3-31-66

## In Memory of the 26 USAF Ground Casualties, Killed in Line of Duty Biên Hòa AB, May 16, 1965

CASUALTY	Grade/Rate	Panel-Line
HAYNES VERNON LEE	CAPT O3	01E 118
ARAGON JOSE RUBEN	SSgt E5	01E 115
BALDONADO SECUNDINO BELL	TSgt E6	01E 117
ROBERT GRAHAM BROWN	MAJ O4	01E 116
BRIAN DALE	SSgt E5	01E 116
BUNCH CLAUDE MARVIN CALE	TSgt E6	01E 116
JAMES MARTIN	SSgt E5	01E 116
CLARK ROBERT LEWIS	SSgt E5	01E 117
CRAWFORD WILLIAM THOMAS	A1C E4	01E 117
DONAGHY EDGAR STOMS	SSgt E5	01E 116
ENGEL TERENCE DEAN	A1C E4	01E 117
ACOSTA JESSE RODRIQUE	SSgt E5	01E 115
FOX CHARLES NATHAN	CAPT O3	01E 118
WEAVER HAYDEN EDWARD	A1C E4	01E 120
HICKS WILLIAM DONALD	SMS E8	01E 118
JEPSON ARTHUR C JR	CAPT O3	01E 118
KEA ANDREW MILLARD	CAPT O3	01E 119
MC FERON ERNEST	CAPT O3	01E 119
RACHAL CHARLES WILLIAM	TSgt E6	01E 119
RAULERSON CLIFFORD H JR	A1C E4	01E 119
SEAMAN DONALD JOSEPH	TSgt E6	01E 119
SHANNON BILLY EUGENE	CAPT O3	01E 120
SNYDER GERALD ALLISON	TSgt E6	01E 120
UNDERWOOD JAMES EDWARD	MAJ O4	01E 120
WAGNER LEE CELIN JR FIDIAM	1LT O2	01E 120
AARON GREGORY JR	TSgt E6	01E 117

**Reference information:** <http://www.virtualwall.org/db/BaldonadoSx01a.htm>

On May 16, 1965, while waiting to take off on a mission, a B-57B exploded on the ground at Biên Hòa, setting off a whole chain of secondary explosions. The resulting conflagration destroyed ten B-57s, eleven VNAF A-1H Skyraiders, and a US Navy F-8 Crusader and caused numerous casualties among air and ground crewmen.

Large numbers of USAF strike aircraft were sent to bases where pavement for aircraft parking was at a premium. Aircraft were parked wing tip to wing tip, vulnerable to an accidental explosion or enemy attack. A need for aircraft revetments was dramatically brought home on 15 May 1965 when the explosion of a bomb under the wing of a loaded B-57 aircraft set off a chain reaction of explosions on the parking apron at Biên Hòa AB, South Vietnam. Forty aircraft were destroyed, 26 Americans killed, and over 60 wounded.

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Even when dealing with common U.S. explosives, any call could be deadly, and trained, professional EOD troops were in constant danger on the job. On May 16, 1965, Biên Hòa AB, Republic of Vietnam, was mortar attacked, and several U.S. Air Force B-57 'Canberra' light bombers were blown up, scattering their loads of 500-pound bombs around the flight line. The bombs had armed fuses, and had been damaged by fire, explosion, and jarring as they flew around the flight line. These were truly haUSAFardous munitions. As the base EOD team, consisting of Captain E. McFeron, and Sergeants C. Bunch, A. Fidiham, and D. Hubbard, worked to disarm them, a 500 pounder detonated, killing all four men.

[http://kalaniosullivan.com/KunsanAB/OtherUnits/Howitwasb\\_a.html](http://kalaniosullivan.com/KunsanAB/OtherUnits/Howitwasb_a.html)

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