

Interim After-Action Report (U)**7AF (IGS)**

- 1. Reference telecom between Lt Colonel Barr, Director of Security Police, Hq 7AF, and Lt Colonel Carter, Chief, Security Police, 377th CSG, the following information is submitted. Information contained in this document has been compiled from data presently available and has been coordinated with the Senior Advisor, Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area (Lt Colonel Garred, USA) and the Vietnamese Defense Force Commander of Tan Son Nhut Air Base (Major Chieu, RVN).**
- 2. At 0320 hours, 31 January 1968, Tan Son Nhut AB received heavy ground-to-ground automatic weapons fire off the east perimeter. The fire appeared to be directed at the POL Storage Area and the east aircraft parking ramp. Since this unit, as a part of 7AF, was already in Condition Red by order of the 7AF Commander, reaction forces were alerted and directed to stand-by. Automatic weapons fire directed onto the installation was reported at the south and west perimeters.**

At 0333 hours, E-6 (a U.S. Manned perimeter defensive bunker on the west perimeter) reported that grenades and B-40 rockets were being directed towards the west perimeter of the base, but were falling short.

At 0334 hours, the same position reported that they had observed approximately 25 individuals just east of the fence line 100 meters west of the perimeter fence.
- 3. At 0340 hours, E-6 reported that he had been hit and the B-40 rockets were exploding on base. By this time, reserve units previously alerted and in stand-by status had been dispatched and were assuming a holding defensive line approximately 70 meters east of the W-8 taxiway (W-8 taxiway is 700 meters east of the perimeter fence) stretching south to north from the high speed taxiway to Runway 25R.**
- 4. At 0344 hours, E-6 reported that the Viet Cong had broken through the west perimeter adjacent to the 051 Gate. Enemy forces were taken under fire by responding Security Alert Teams, Reserve Security Alert Teams, Quick Reaction Teams (13 man Security Police Reserve Units made up of off-duty personnel) and U.S. Army augmentation forces to themselves Security Police Squadron from Task Force 35. (Total U.S. Holding forces of approximately 155 personnel.)**
- 5. Through the Joint Defense Operations Center, three ARVN tanks, U.S. Army armed helicopters and 105mm Artillery were directed to the scene and engaged the Viet Cong. The helicopters continuously assaulted the enemy inside the perimeter fence and immediately west of the fence (outside the perimeter) and the ARVN tanks assaulted the VC within the perimeter from the rear and left flank (south) of the holding line.**

The Joint Defense Operations Center requested and received reinforcements from Gen Ware, IFF Commander on the scene. The first unit to arrive was C Troop, 3 Squad, 4th Cavalry. They were employed in a flanking movement from the north and attacked the enemy exploitation force just outside the perimeter. This attack enabled the defense units countering the penetration to mount an internal counter attack and re-establish the perimeter.
- 6. Heavy fighting continued and at 0630 hours, a Security Police tower reported that the VC were withdrawing.**

At 0635, the U.S. Forces assault line was withdrawn about 50 meters to the east to align with two companies of the VNAF Airborne to prepare for a counter attack "sweep and destroy" to the west perimeter. The friendly holding an assault line was now subjected to intense B-40 rockets barrages from off-base positions. All during the heavy contact, the base was constantly subjected to small arms and automatic weapons fire from the south and the east.
- 7. At 0729 hours, part of an armored cavalry troop from the 25th Infantry Division moved to the 051 gate to seal the breached fence line. Heavy firing continued within the perimeter while the combined U.S. and VN assault line pushed through to the perimeter. The assault line, U.S. And VN tanks and armed helicopters continued exchanging heavy fire with the enemy until 1117 hours, 31 January 1968.**

The E-6 bunker, when overrun early in the assault, was occupied by the Viet Cong. The enemy had turned the U.S.

M-60 machine gun in the bunker onto the counter-attacking forces and were holding back the friendly forces. The bunker was assaulted by armed helicopters, armored and ground forces before it was re-secured. Upon completion of securing the bunker, the counter-assault was continued and the friendly forces advanced to the perimeter road line, secured their area and held defensive positions.

The entire area was swept and declared free of living enemy. Defensive line positions were established to secure the breached west perimeter. From this point until the present, there have been no further breaches of the installation perimeter fence. Continued incidents of enemy sniper fire, automatic weapons firing and hostile harassment fire directed onto the installation have been experienced. Many of these incidents have been engaged by the Security Police. Heavy through light enemy contact around the base perimeter has also been continuing.

8. At this point, it is apparent that the assault on Tan Son Nhut Air Base was conducted by the 271st Regiment of the 9th Viet Cong Division (Main Force). The estimated strength of this initial assaulting regiment was 600. The regiment reportedly was trained in Cambodia and is estimated to have been on the move for four months. The unit was well equipped and its weaponry included but was not limited to:

- a. B-40 Rockets.
- b. RPG-7 Rockets.
- c. 57mm Recoilless Rifles.
- d. RKG-3T AT Grenades.
- e. Large assortment of hand and stick grenades.
- f. Claymore mines.
- g. Satchel Charges.
- h. Blocked TNT.
- i. 50 Cal Machine Guns.
- j. 30 Cal Machine Guns
- k. M-16 A1 Rifles
- l. AK-47 Rifles
- m. AK-50 Rifles
- n. 30 Cal Carbines
- o. 75mm Recoilless Rifles

9. Reliable intelligence information indicates that the 271st Regiment of the 9th Viet Cong Division was to completely over run and secure Tan Son Nhut Air Base as an integral portion of the massive offensive against the Gia Dinh Providence. The Tan Son Nhut Air Base complex was under siege by an estimated 12-15 enemy battalions with an estimated strength of 2000 – 2500 personnel. The overall operating plan indicated that after the breach of the west perimeter was accomplished, the enemy was to pass through the perimeter from all sides, organize and move on to MACV Headquarters Compound and 7AF Headquarters Compound, over run and secure them. Indication are that the method of operation was to accomplish these objectives while inflicting only minor damages to the facilities and property which they planned to possess.

**FOR THE COMMANDER:
BILLY J. CARTER
Lt Colonel, USAF
Chief, Security Police**

**1 Atch
Pertinent Statistical
Information**

PERTINENT STATISTICAL INFORMATION

U.S. Casualties

KIA

**USAF – 4 (Security Police)
Army – 18**

WIA

**USAF – 11
Army – 33**

VN Casualties

KIA

**VNAF – 0
ARVN -29**

WIA

**VNAF - 2
ARVN - 11+**

Enemy Casualties

Inside Perimeter

Outside Perimeter

**KIA (Body Count)
Captured**

**157
2**

**500+
12+**

Aircraft Damaged/Destroyed

USAF

Type

Lightly Damages

Destroyed

**AC47
C47
C54
C117
H43**

**9
1
1
2
1**

**0
0
0
0
0**

Total 14

0

VNAF aircraft did not sustain damage.

STRUCTURAL DAMAGE

**4 Connex's of paint burned (total loss)
1 trailer van burned (total loss)
1 trailer house burned (total loss)
1 shed roof damaged (repairable)**

RUNWAY DAMAGE

3' X 1' X 3" impact hole. Runway remained operational.

Atch 1

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