



HISTORY, BACKGROUND, NEWS, & UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES

**Viet Cong attacks RVN Air Bases at Biên Hòa and Đà Nẵng, 1964-1965;
USAF Security Program Survey of Air Base Ground Defense, Vietnam**

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Phù Cát Air Base, 1041st(T) SPS, 1 967

1 - Brief History, Background, and News: Viet Cong attacks against two South Vietnam Air Bases in 1964-1965. The two major Air Bases Bien Hoa AB, near Saigon, and Đà Nẵng AB, south of the DMZ, were attacked by suicide-sapper teams, tossing explosive satchels, and under cover rocket and mortar barrages. US Military were killed and wounded and aircraft were destroyed. These two attacks had unforeseen consequences for the Viet Cong and NVA, leading to a major expansion of USAF security forces, and the establishment of Combat Security Forces within the US Air Force.

Viet Cong attacks upon South Vietnam Air Bases increased with loss of US lives and destroyed and damaged aircraft. USAF Security Program surveyed and focused on developing an airbase ground defense concept, and test specialized Security Police Squadron forces: Biên Hòa Air Base, 1 November 1964: Viet Cong attacked with rockets and mortars.



Every airfield should be a stronghold of fighting air-groundmen, and not the abode of uniformed civilians in the prime of life protected by detachments of soldiers.

Winston Churchill, 29 June 1941

The true measure of any program lies in the results achieved.

US Air Force Doctrine Document 2-4.1, page 1

(<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/usaf/afdd/2+1/afddZ+I.pdf>)

The following selected headline news articles reported the major attacks upon South Vietnam Air Bases that prompted the USAF to develop a combat security police squadron (*fighting air-groundmen*) capable of carrying out an Air Base Defense Mission.

LBJ REPLACES B-57S DESTROYED BY REDS

PACIFIC
STARS AND STRIPES
AN AUTHORIZED PUBLICATION OF
THE MEMBER SERVICES AND SALES
10c DAILY
15c WITH SUPPLEMENTS

Vol. 20, No. 307 AIR EDITION Tuesday, Nov. 3, 1964

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Johnson sought means Sunday to tighten defenses against mortar attacks such as raked a U.S. air base in South Vietnam Saturday, and he immediately replaced the jet bombers destroyed in that strike.

The attack on Bien Hoa airfield near Saigon killed four Americans and destroyed five B-57 twin-engine jet bombers.

The President's moves were announced by the White House after a 75-minute Sunday afternoon meeting between Johnson and top aides including Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, international security affairs adviser McGeorge Bundy, Under Secretary of State George W. Ball and William P. Bundy, assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs.

The Administration tended to regard the affair as serious because of the loss of life and planes, but not as a major development in the war against the communist insurgents. It was seen as an episode of a type difficult to prevent in such a war where the enemy has many opportunities for such hit-and-run surprise attacks.

Presidential Press Secretary George Ruddy issued this statement after Johnson was briefed by his advisers.

The President met with the secretary of state and defense
(Continued on Page 3, Col. 1)

General Praises



1-1. (above) **Biên Hòa Air Base**, North of Saigon, came under fiery rocket and mortar fire, 1 NOV 1964, receiving 70 rockets and mortars.

1-2. (Photo, right): **November 1, 1964, Bien Hoa Air Base:** A Viet Cong mortar team penetrated Bien Hoa Air Base perimeter in a fierce thirty minutes Stand Off rocket and mortar barrage, striking the flight line with 70 rounds killing four US servicemen and two Vietnamese, wounding an additional 76, and destroying a USAF squadron of five B-57 Canberra fighter-bombers, and 25 helicopters and fixed wing aircraft.



The above USAF Photo shows the unfolding disaster that befell Bien Hoa Air Base, 1 November 1964.

1-3. For a better understanding of what the disaster looked like, click the below link and animate the composite photo. *(It is a large file so let it load)*T

Click to Animate below Photo

http://www.vspa.com/images/a_bh-b57-mortar-attack_1964.gif

(Composite by Don Poss)



1-4: AP Article, 2 July 1965.



Barracks at Bien Hoa AB near Saigon suffered direct hits by communist Viet Cong mortar fire, Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor (right photo) visits the air base Sunday morning. Wreckage of destroyed barracks is in background. Four Americans were killed during the attack. (AP Staffphotos)

Johnson Replaces B-57s Hit by Reds

(Continued From Page 1)
to receive reports on the Viet Cong flash raid at the Bien Hoa airfield.
Steps in cooperation with Vietnamese authorities in local defense measures were discussed, and the President was informed that his orders to replace the aircraft lost in the raid had been carried out.

Attack Was Political, Barry Hints

General Praises Defenders

(Continued From Page 1)
Officials also disclosed Sunday that, as a result of the raid, consideration is being given to using more U.S. personnel in guarding airfields. They said this is being discussed by U.S. authorities in Washington and Saigon and has been taken up with the South Vietnamese government.
The officials said the B-57s had been kept at Bien Hoa in case there was a need for heavy bombing strikes anywhere in the area.
About 40 B-57s were moved into Vietnam after the August Tonkin Gulf incident and are regarded as a tacit threat to communist north Vietnam bases which supply the communist rebels in South Vietnam.
However, officials said they assumed communist leaders recognized that the destruction and

Wounded Sergeant Charged Viet Reds

(Continued From Page 1)
safer areas. At Saigon Airport, U.S. jets were moved from one exposed end of the field to another position.
Westmoreland said Vietnamese paratroopers and marines were stationed at Bien Hoa but were unable to move out quickly because of danger of minefields and poor communication at night.
Asked why the B-57s had been parked together, Westmoreland said the disadvantage of dispersal of planes is that local security for each plane is much difficult and maintenance is awkward.
Official damage and personnel losses at Bien Hoa, as given by Westmoreland:
Five B-57s destroyed, eight heavily damaged and seven with minor damage;
Four B-47 aircraft rescue helicopters heavily damaged.

Candidates Set Finale

(Continued From Page 1)
full electoral speed. Humphrey was seeking votes in California and in Goldwater's home state.
APRTS reported Humphrey said in Los Angeles that Republican Party workers have seduced to "harass potential voters" into

Attack Was Political, Barry Hints

BIEN HOA, South Vietnam (AP)—"Our sergeant's arm was nearly blown away by mortar fragments but he grabbed his rifle and went charging out the door hollering he was to get the Viet Cong for this," a muddy, tired soldier said Sunday.
He was telling about the heavy mortar attack on American installations at Bien Hoa Air Base during which four Americans were killed.
The fraction of American soldiers was generally shock, anger and partial disbelief in the lightning attack after midnight. It was both the boldest and most vicious against American forces in Vietnam to date.
SP4 Richard Hafer of Cortland, N.Y., said his sergeant finally was virtually forced to go to the emergency hospital set up in a mess hall.
Hafer is a member of an American helicopter company whose quarters were blasted by the Viet Cong fire. Extremely accurate fire scored five direct hits on huts.
Half of the American wounded and all the dead were counted

Information from the American spokesman in Saigon indicated that both the South Vietnamese soldiers and American marines were responsible for the lapse in security that permitted a Vietcong assault team to enter the Danang base.

The spokesman said the team

of 6 to 10 men first entered through an outer perimeter patrolled by South Vietnamese Government forces and then through an inner perimeter for which the American marines had total responsibility.

At Danang, some marine officers were protesting that they had sought to patrol the outer southern region of the base but had been prevented by the Vietnamese from doing so.

According to the most accurate reconstruction tonight, the Vietcong team cut the wire in the air base fence at 1:30 A. M. They were supported by 10 or more rounds of 81-mm. mortar fire.

The team destroyed with explosive charges two United States Air Force C-130 Hercules transport planes and damaged another. One Air Force F-102 Delta Dagger fighter plane was destroyed and two more severely damaged with 57-mm. recoilless-rifle fire.

1-5 (Photo left, Composite by Don Poss) July 1, 1965, Đà Nẵng Air Base:

Đà Nẵng Air Base was attacked by a Viet Cong sapper squad accompanied by personnel from the Third Battalion, 18th Regiment, 325th People's Army of Vietnam Division (PAVN).



Đà Nẵng Air Base, 1 July 1965: A 25 men Viet Cong Suicide Sapper team penetrated the giant Air Base's southeast perimeter (guarded by ARVN), through five holes cut in the perimeter fence. Attacking under a mortar barrage of high-explosive rounds, a firefight ensued with TSgt Terrance Jensen (KIA) and AP Al Handy (TDY).

US Casualties: 1KIA, 3 WIA. **Aircraft:** 3 destroyed, and several damaged;
1 Viet Cong POW was captured.

1-6: Below photo shows the aftermath of the Air Base attack. Revetments area debris is mostly cleaned up, but destroyed and damaged C-130s are partially still in place on 8 July 1965.



Background on Air Police Đà Nẵng AirBase duties on 1 July 1965: During the Sapper attack there were 90 Air Police personnel at Đà Nẵng Air Base and assigned to the **23rd Air Base Group/AP**. Their duty was security of Air Force Assets, and *not* security of the Air Base or perimeter (manned USMC and ARVN). AP Weapons: .38 revolvers, M-16 Rifles, and Shotguns.

The next twelve months would see a rapid build up of Air Police personnel. The **6252nd Air Police Squadron** was activated and expanded to 1100 Air Police, and 55 K-9 Sentry Dog teams. In that year, the squadron name would change twice more: **35th Air Police Squadron**, and **366th APS/SPS**. Duties expanded to include internal perimeter security, ammo dump, base security, and law enforcement.

Don Poss, Đà Nẵng AB, K-9, 1965-1966

July 1, 1965: Đà Nẵng AB attacked by Sappers and received 6 mortars. US casualties, 1 dead (Air Police TSgt Terrance Jensen) and 3 wounded; 3 aircraft destroyed, 3 damaged; and 1 VC POW captured.

Newspapers: 1 July 1965: Đà Nẵng Air Base attacked by Sappers and mortars.

1-8. NEWS - Viet Cong Suicide Unit hits Đà Nẵng Air Base, RVN, 1 July 1965.

VC ATTACK DA NANG

PACIFIC STAR AND STRIPES
AN AUTHORIZED PUBLICATION BY THE GAMES 1041ST SQ TAP 1511
10c DAILY
15c WITH SUPPLEMENTS

Vol. 21, No. 182 AIR EDITION Friday, July 2, 1965

DA NANG, Republic of Vietnam (UPI)—A small communist suicide squad raced into Da Nang AB early Thursday and used hand grenades to destroy three American planes.

Under cover of a mortar barrage, the Viet Cong killed one air policeman and damaged several other planes. Five other Americans were wounded slightly during the attack.

The air policeman, standing guard near the south end of the field, was killed when the squad sprayed his post with small arms fire.

The attackers destroyed two U.S. Air Force C-130 Hercules transport planes and one F-102 jet fighter. One other Hercules transport and two other F-102s were damaged.

American authorities at first believed the planes had been destroyed by the mortar fire, but investigation proved the Viet Cong squad penetrated the defenses of the base to pitch their grenades.

Sirens at the base wailed as soon as the first mortar hit the

(Continued on Back Page, Col. 1)

Congress debates Vietnam policy, Page 5.
U.S. planes wreck nearway at Vinh in north Vietnam, Page 8.
D Zone a stern monitor to U.S. troops, Page 3.

*First Air Policeman Killed in Action
in the Vietnam War:
TSgt Terrance Jensen
Silver Star, 1 July 1965*

1-9. VC Mortars destroy C-130 Aircraft at Đà Nẵng Air Base, RVN, 1 July 1965.



1-10. VC Mortars destroy F-102s at Đà Nẵng Air Base, RVN, 1 Jul 1965. TSgt Terrance Jensen, 23rd ABG/AP KIA.



Suicide Unit Hits Da Nang

(Continued From Page 1)

south end of the airstrip at about 1:30 a.m. From a position between the base and the southern limits of the defense perimeter, the guerrillas poured about 30 rounds of 81mm shells onto the edge of the runway.

The suicide squad fled when American crewmen scrambled from their tents and trailers surrounding the aircraft.

At the same time the suicide squad was cutting through the tangled barbed wire defenses of the base, another Viet Cong squad penetrated within two miles of the base and unleashed the barrage of mortar rounds.

Most of the mortar fire landed beyond the airplane parking area. And at least a dozen rounds hit the runway.

Damage from the mortar fire was called "minimal" and did not put the vital base out of operation.

As the squad touched off the grenades they sprayed the area with automatic weapons and small arms fire.

One eyewitness said he saw about six Viet Cong running back toward the barbed wire after the attack was over.

There was no immediate indication of whether any of the Viet Cong infiltrators were killed.

Reports of shooting around the flightline tallied with reports of shadowy figures running away from the plane park.

A Marine spokesman said Vietnamese troops were responsible for the sector of the perimeter in which the Viet Cong set up their mortars.

American airmen risked their lives to race in among the blazing aircraft. They hauled a number of Delta Daggers to safety with two tractors.

The base, 135 miles north of Saigon, is used by the U.S. Air Force for many of the bombing raids against communist north Vietnam and for support attacks against Viet Cong ground raids in the area. The base and the nearby city of Da Nang have been protected since March by the 3d U.S. Marine Amphibious Force, which numbers about 15,000 men.

Marine mortars answered the communist mortar fire soon after it began. Spotter planes flew overhead, dropping flares in an attempt to locate the enemy.

Marine patrols hurried out beyond the perimeter. All roads in and around the town were closed and police and troops patrolled the streets.

All personnel were evacuated from the southern end of the runway as soon as the planes were hauled to safety. None were permitted back into the area because it was feared bombs aboard the damaged aircraft might explode.

Two of the American wounded were members of A Det., 500th Fighter Interceptor Sq. They were cut by flying glass when explosions blew out the windows of the trailers in which they were sleeping.

The three other wounded were marines.

Viet Cong attacks against Air Bases would continue throughout the war, with loss of US lives and aircraft destroyed or damaged on the ground.

- **August 2, 1965:** Nha Trang AB received 7 rounds; no casualties or aircraft destroyed/damaged.

August 23, 1965: Biên Hòa AB received 97 rounds; US casualties, KIA, 24, WIA, 11 aircraft damaged; VNAF, 0 KIA, 5 WIA.

After attacks at Đà Nẵng and Biên Hòa airbases, the USAF Security Program focused on developing an Air Base Ground Defense concept, and combat security force capable of engaging and repelling enemy commando raids in the Republic of Vietnam, to be known as ***Operation Safeside***.

From the fire and flames of the Viet Cong and NVA's initial major attacks against Bien Hoa and Đà Nẵng Air Bases, Operation Safeside was formed, and the Air Force Security Police would evolve in to Combat Security Police (Light Infantry), and after the Vietnam War ended in 1975, the Security Force Squadrons.

Duties and Weapons would continue to change and improve. Don Poss