

Biên Hòa Air Base

----- Original Message -----

From: BobGV@aol.com
To: Ron Peterson
Sent: Monday, May 12, 2003 8:55 PM
Subject RE: First Major attack on Biên Hòa Air Base.

Ron,

I was reading about the death of A2C Horace Holbrook on **12 May 1967** from a rocket attack and you commented that it was the first major attack at Biên Hòa Air Base.

No disrespect intended to Airman Holbrook but that was not the first major attack at Biên Hòa as you stated. I was stationed there (as a A2C) in 1964 and we had 80 rounds or so of 81mm mortars lobbed in and four Army hotches sustained direct hits and all the fatalities that night were Army soldiers.¹ I know of several who were wounded including an Air Force Airman who was on the air crew of an HH-43 (firefighter/rescue) on standby near the control tower and while running for cover away from the tower, was a victim of friendly fire from the Army area where the majority of the casualties had occurred. We had a squadron of B-57s on the hotpad at the time of the attack and afterwards, only (2) were flying the next day - six were burned to puddles of melted metal and engines. I was in the fire department and I took pics of this myself. An Airman was awarded a Silver Star that night for pulling a burning parachute flare off several hundred thousand gallons of aviation fuel stored in rubber bladders.

I think you will have to agree this was probably the first major attack. The attack began about 12:20 a.m. on Halloween of that year.

I did like your website and sure enjoyed reading about those who were there after me.

Thanks for your efforts.

Robert G. Vanzant
A2C, AF-----
Fire Protection Specialist (AFSC 57150)
Biên Hòa.AB, RVN (APO 27)
GOOGLE: "Biên Hòa" "November 1, 1964"

[Don Poss, VSPA.com]

1 "Bien Hoa, on 1 November 1964, was the first base to be attacked...." JOHN W. HUSTON, Maj Gen, USAF , Chief, Office of Air Force History. AIR BASE DEFENSE IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM 1961-1973, by Robert P. Fox, LTC USAF, FORWARD.

The Attack: 1 November 1964. 0026 hours, BH STO 70 Rounds. A/C DES 5, DAM 15. US KIA 4, WIA 30. RVN A/C DES 2, DAM 14. KIA/WIA 0. AIR BASE DEFENSE IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM 1961-1973, by Robert P. Fox, LTC USAF, Page 173 (Chart).



Two days before the U.S. presidential election, Viet Cong mortars shell Biên Hòa AB near Saigon. Four Americans are killed, 76 wounded. Five B-57 bombers are destroyed, and 15 are damaged.

On November 1, 1964, Viet Cong squads shelled the airfield at Biên Hòa with mortars, destroying five of the B-57s parked there and damaging 15 others.

Photo: American aircraft burn on the ground at Biên Hòa AB.

On 19 Feb 1965, the B-57Bs were released for armed combat operations with the first mission taking place the same day. The B-57Bs hit North Vietnamese territory for the first time on March 2, some 25 miles north of the DMZ.

Source: The Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition, Volume 3, pp. 590-591

"... **The Biên Hòa incident of November 1, 1964** poses an even more pressing requirement for action under the retaliatory principle confirmed in NSAM 314." Air Force's Ground Support in Vietnam: "For the first three years of U.S. involvement in South Vietnam, the Air Bases were more or less left alone by the Viet Cong. All of that changed shortly after midnight on November 1, 1964, when Viet Cong gunners fired between 60 and 80 rounds from six 81mm mortars on Biên Hòa, then escaped from the area without being detected. Four Americans were killed and 72 wounded. Moreover, five B-57 jet bombers were destroyed and 15 damaged, along with four U.S. Air Force helicopters and three VNAF (Republic of Vietnam Air Force) A-1H fighter-bombers. Air Force security policemen began trying to improve base defenses as harassing attacks became more frequent..."

Timeline: "November 1, 1964

Vietcong raiders infiltrate the US Air Base at Bien Hoa, 12 miles north of Saigon, killing 5 US servicemen and two Vietnamese, wounding about 76, destroying 6 B-57s, and damaging some 20 other aircraft. Senator Goldwater challenges President Johnson to admit to the American people that the US is involved in an undeclared war in Vietnam."

The Vietnam War, America Commits, 1961 - 1964: November 1, 1964 - The first attack by Viet Cong against Americans in Vietnam occurs at Biên Hòa AB, 12 miles north of Saigon. A pre-dawn mortar assault kills five Americans, two South Vietnamese, and wounds nearly a hundred others. President Johnson dismisses all recommendations for a retaliatory air strike against North Vietnam.

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