



Photo Courtesy:

A2C George Michael Bevich, Jr.,

Tân Sơn Nhứt 377th APS,
KIA 04 DEC 1966, Combat: Sappers and Mortars;
TSN Attack of 04 Dec 1966
by **James P. Jerome**
1967-1968

This is in regards to your request for information on the December 1966 attack on Tân Sơn Nhứt AB. Though I did not know [Airman Bevich](#) (above photo), this letter is what I remember of the attack, and our response to it. I was just one of the small cogs in the big wheel that made up the 377th Security Police Squadron, I'll always remember the attack and the feelings of camaraderie of my fellow Air Policemen. I use the old designation of what is now the Security Forces.

Sincerely,

James P Jerome,
377th SPS, Nov, 1966-Nov 1967

January 24, 1998

Dear Joseph,

I was at TSN when the Dec. 1966 attack happened. We went to the Base Chapel for the services for the three fallen Air Policemen. It was a very moving experience. The chapel was full with some of us standing outside.

This Airman was living in the 400 Area which was at the end of Charlie Row. Charlie Row is where all of the Ranch Hand aircraft were parked and loaded. Also the Caribou's, which still belonged to the Army, used this ramp, with all in-country supplies loaded and sent on its way. Needless to say living in the 400 Area was at most times a rather noisy place to live.

Air Police occupied one barrack in this area, with the rest of the Squadron over in the concrete barracks. On the night that Airman Bevich was killed we had hit the racks early so we could start our shifts at 0400 hours. We were awoken to the sounds of mortar rounds impacting out by the flight line. Also a LtCol from next door came running through spreading the alarm. Airman Haugen, from Minnesota, had the bunk above me. We hit the floor stuffing our feet into our boots, and headed to the bunker located next to the barracks. This bunker was two conex's end to end with sandbags piled up the sides and across the roof. Also there was a stack of sandbags in front of the door to prevent any blast from a mortar round to enter the doorway, and thus getting at the personnel inside.

For some reason I grabbed by my fatigues on the way out, and was trying to get into them with the mob of people in the bunker. Why that stayed with me is beyond me. But you do live very intensely for a few hours. We stayed in the bunker for only about 15 minutes when we started to get the idea that maybe we ought to get over to the Squadron area and pick up our weapons and report in. The bunker was a mix of officers and maintenance types

from the C-130 squadrons and F-4 Reckon Wing, with AS mixed in. Some of the officers suggested we all stay put until we heard the all clear. Our last word from our Squadron was to get to the weapons room as fast and as safely as possible.

Haugen and I waited caught the shift of mortar fire out to the west of the main part of the parking aprons. We decided to get a move on. The two APs, post-one at the entrance to the cantonment area and the other across the street at the entrance to Charlie Row, told us to hold up until they could clear us up the street and over the next street to the weapons room. As we waited for clearance we listened to the radio traffic from the portables that the two gate guards carried. Most of the VC were making a frontal assault on Echo sector. Those posts were screaming for reinforcement when they had time to get on the radio. It seemed like forever before we got the OK to make our run to the weapons' room. Just as we started out the VC Sapper Squad started to set off satchel charges under the aircraft out on the parking aprons. The one I remember most was when they blew up a B-57 Canberra bomber at the west end of Charlie Row. This sent shrapnel over us, and onto us. I still have a bum mark on my chest from where a hot piece of metal landed.

As soon as things got sort of quiet again we took off for the weapons room. The last thing I heard from the gate was the guard telling the other posts that we were coming. As we ran up the street we had to slow down for two more gate posts at the first one I turned around and was surprised to see about 30 troopers with me and 4 or 5 others leading the pack. As we ran towards the Base Hospital the guards there told to slow down because up ahead at the old French fort APs were loading ammo, and they had a guard out. From the old French fort to the weapons room was less than 120 yards. A few of the group stopped to help load ammo for another pickup which had showed up for more ammo. We picked up weapons and the NCO that was handling the alert made up SAT teams and sent us on our way. The team I was on went to re-enforce the fence over behind the 800 area just as we were loading up on pickups and jeeps to head out, and an NCO came out and told us to hold tight. He stated that they wanted to get a better picture of what was going on, and whether an attack was coming through that area or it was just harassment. The VC fired a bunch of rounds and threw a few grenades, and then pulled back. About twenty of us were taken around to reinforce gates and the perimeter for the rest of the night. At around 1400 hours we were sent back to the barracks with our weapons and told to get some sleep but be ready to report back at a moments notice. All of us were beat, so sleep came easy!

That night around 0200 hours the balloon went up and out we went again. This time I was posted out on the west end of Charlie Row guarding a string of aircraft. There I stayed until day light when we were hauled back to Billy Hill Control (Base Police HQ). There we were made into another SAT and told to stay together and get some rest. Around noon we all were reposted to gates and stayed there until normal posting change at 1900 hours. Back to the barracks we dragged ourselves for some much needed sleep.

Four days, later I moved into the barracks until I returned to The Land of the Big BX. After Christmas, the Flight moved upstairs, and it was then the guys in my bunk area told me the bunk I'd had downstairs belonged to Airman Cole, who was killed the first night of the attack. This had a somewhat unsettling reaction to this recipient. Bad luck was top most in my mind, with one month of my tour left to go. After a hour or so I was able to get the blues and poor me attitude out of the system.



A2C Bevich
A2C John Matthew Cole
A2C Oliver Riddle
Tombstone

What I remember of the attack was a lot of green untried Air Policemen who met the challenge of a VC attack and did an outstanding job. If it wasn't for the early alerts given by the K-9 AP Airmen it could of been a lot worse. I believe that three Air Policemen were killed, [A2C George Michael Bevich](#), [A2C John Matthew Cole](#), and one other who's name is on the Roll of Honor, [A2C Oliver John Riddle](#). This last Airman was only in-country about 24 hours when he was taken from us. Airman Bevich was not known to me personally, but we an felt a deep sense of lost and the Squadron was a very somber place on the day of the memorial service.

I wish you luck, Joe, in your search and hope this letter will shed a little light on the attack. Its been thirty-one years, and the memory is a little softer when one reflects back on those times.

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