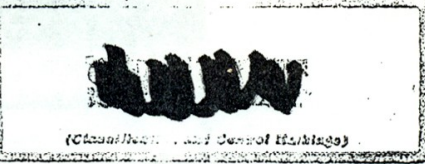


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1. COUNTRY: Republic of Vietnam (RVN)
 2. SUBJECT: VIET CONG (VC) -- Viet Cong (U)
 VC Attack Tan Son Nhut AB (U)
 3. ISC NUMBER:
 4. DATE OF INFORMATION: 4-7 December 1966
 5. PLACE AND DATE OF ACQ: Saigon, RVN; 4-7 December 1966
 6. EVALUATION: SOURCE INFORMATION
 See Item 15
 7. SOURCE: See Item 15

8. REPORT NUMBER: 1 655 0334 66
 9. DATE OF REPORT: 9 DEC 1966
 10. NO. OF PAGES:
 11. REFERENCES: DIRM 1S2a

12. ORIGINATOR: OSI Dist 50, Saigon, RVN (56-715/03-1/7/71)
 13. PREPARED BY: SA MELTON L. HINTON
 Det 5002, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN
 14. APPROVING AUTHORITY: DANIEL J. TAYLOR, JR., Colonel, USAF
 Commander

dab

1. (S) At approximately 0125 hours, 4 December 1966, Tan Son Nhut AB (TSN AB) was infiltrated by a force of Viet Cong (VC). At the same time, reports were received of the base being mortared from outside the perimeter. Initially, approximately 30 VC had penetrated the western perimeter of the base and proceeded east along the northern edge of the east-west runway. Friendly Reaction Forces engaged this VC force and a second force which had followed the first. Fighting continued until approximately 0530 hours. The VC force sustained 18 killed and four captured and 10 being wounded. Three USAF Air Police (AP) were killed and 20 wounded. Two aircraft were damaged during the attack, apparently for the most part by VC infiltrators in the flight line area who used blast grenades, M-79 grenade launchers and Chicom antitank grenade launchers. The base plate of a 60mm mortar was discovered just north of the western end of the runway, along with several 60mm mortar rounds and shipping plugs for the same type of ammunition. There is no evidence to confirm earlier reports of off-base mortars being used, nor is there any indication that the 60mm mortar was responsible for aircraft damage in spite of it having been fired by the VC. At 2000 hours, 4 December 1966, APs in the area north and west of the western end of the runway exchanged fire with a hostile force within the base perimeter. Ten VC were killed and one AP wounded. This VC force is believed to have been remnants of the previous night's force who were detected trying to infiltrate the base under the cover of darkness. At 0500 hours, 4 December 1966, a satchel charge exploded in a downtown Saigon billet injuring 12 US Army soldiers. On both 6 and 7 December 1966, satchel charges were discovered in an ammunition storage area near an ammunition bunker which had exploded during the 4 December 1966 assault.

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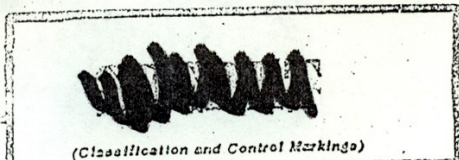
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2. (C) At approximately 0125 hours, 4 December 1966, a force of Viet Cong (VC) gained access to Tan Son Nhut Air Base (TSN AB) by penetrating the western perimeter in the area between Gate #9 and the viaduct which enters the base at a point approximately 900 meters north of the gate. The presence of the VC was detected by a roving USAF Air Police patrol. Reaction Teams were dispatched to the area and flare ships were summoned to provide illumination. The clash between the Reaction Forces and the VC infiltrators continued until approximately 0530 hours. The VC casualties numbered 18 killed and four wounded. The four VC wounded were captured by Friendly Forces. Casualties among the Reaction Forces totaled three Air Policemen killed and 20 Air Policemen and three Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) personnel wounded. In addition, five Air Police vehicles were destroyed. Preliminary questioning of one of the four captured VC revealed the VC penetration force initially numbered 30 men. (Contributor: Combat Operations Center, MACV and 377th Air Police Squadron) (OSI Evaluation: A-1)

3. (S) The following aircraft parked in the area near USAF Base Operations were damaged or destroyed as a result of the Viet Cong attacks: Two TV-121 were slightly damaged; one USAF RB-57 sustained minor damage and one sustained major damage; one USAF RF-101 received major damage and two received minor damage; one USAF RF-4C was slightly damaged; two USAF RC-47s received major damage, three were damaged slightly; one USAF CH3C sustained major damage and two were damaged slightly; one US Navy P2V received major damage and three received minor damage. In addition, one Ground Power cart was destroyed. The base resumed normal operations by 0900 hours, 4 December 1966. (Contributor: 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing and 9th Air Force Director of Intelligence) (OSI Evaluation: A-1)

4. (C) The VC, after penetrating the western perimeter of the base, proceeded east in the area north of the runway. At a position located approximately at XS801960, the VC apparently set up a Chicom 60mm mortar. After the attack, a base plate for such a mortar was discovered in this approximate position. Along with the base plate, observers found five 60mm mortar rounds and over a dozen plastic plugs that are placed in the fuse hole in the body of the mortar round during shipping. These plugs are removed and replaced by fuses prior to firing the projectile. A number of VC crossed the runway in the area of XS810960 and proceeded south to the aircraft parking area. Damage to the aircraft was apparently inflicted for the most part, if not exclusively, by these VC who used M-79 Grenade launchers, offensive and fragmentation hand grenades and Chicom-type 56 antitank grenade launchers firing Chicom-type 50 HEAT (High Explosive Anti-Tank) grenades. There is no evidence to indicate that any of the aircraft were damaged by rounds from the 60mm mortar; however, what were thought to have been explosions of mortar ammunition were heard in the area of the aircraft parking area during the early part of the fighting. The location of the mortar tube and bipod is unknown at the present time. At approximately 0220 hours during the morning of 4 December 1966, an explosion occurred in a US Navy ammunition storage area at XS808894. On 6 December 1966, a 62 lb satchel charge was found in a similar ammunition storage area immediately next to the Navy site and on 7 December 1966, another 62 lb satchel charge was found in an ammunition storage area just on the other side of the Navy bunker. Both of these satchel charges were identical in appearance and composition. They consisted of two blocks of plastic explosive wrapped in a plastic cover and then bound together. A timer, detonator and batteries had been placed on the charges; however, the detonator had not been placed in the explosive nor had the watches been wound. (Contributor: 377th Supply Squadron, EOD Section) (OSI Evaluation: A-2)



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5. (C) At about 1900 hours, 4 December 1966, approximately 14 hours after the earlier fighting had ended, sentries in the vicinity of Gate 55, located toward the northern end of the western perimeter of TSN AB received hostile small arms fire from a point outside the base. Return fire by the sentries and an aircraft accounted for five, possibly six, VC being killed. No friendly casualties were sustained. One hour later, at approximately 2000 hours, 4 December 1966, USAF patrols in the area west and north of the western end of the runway came under fire from hostile forces in place within the perimeter of the base. Exchange of fire continued until approximately 0430 hours, 5 December 1966. Ten VC were killed as a result of this last action. One USAF AP was slightly wounded. (Contributor: 7th Air Force Warning Center and 377th Air Police Squadron) (OSI Evaluation: A-1)

6. (C) In a possibly related development, at 0500 hours, 4 December 1966, the Headquarters-Billets of the US Army 6th Psyops Battalion, 83 Le Van Duyet Street, Saigon, RVN, was the scene of a terrorist explosion. A 25 lb satchel charge had been placed on the roof of the building which had been formerly occupied by personnel of the United States Agency for International Development. Access to the roof is believed to have been gained from an adjoining building which is under construction. Twelve US Army soldiers were wounded, none seriously. Damage to the building was termed moderate. A fire that began as a result of the explosion was quickly extinguished. (Contributor: 135th MI Gp, US Army) (OSI Evaluation: A-1)

COMMENTS OF THE APPROVING OFFICER:

(C) The VC attack of TSN AB was the largest such action directed against a USAF facility in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) since the beginning of hostilities. Effective reaction by Friendly Forces precluded the infliction of a greater amount of damage to US personnel and equipment. The VC force which was engaged during the night of 4 December was in all probability a remnant of the original infiltrating force which had concealed itself in the tall grass and ditches during the day and was attempting to exfiltrate the base under the cover of darkness. It is possible that those VC who were able to escape the confines of the base during the height of the fighting in the early morning of 4 December 1966 surmised that some of their force, having possibly escaped detection, would attempt to exit the base and, for this reason, fired upon Gate 51, hoping to draw US forces out of the area to be used by the escaping VC.

(C) The question of when the satchel charges were placed in the ammunition storage area has not, as yet, been resolved. The fact that the charges had not been primed suggests that the man responsible for this was killed before he could accomplish his mission, perhaps while priming the charge in the nearby US Navy bunker which exploded. This becomes plausible in view of EOD's opinion that the CONEX in the Navy storage area was exploded by a massive charge rather than by a mortar round or grenade. This opinion is based on the assumption that a large charge was needed to detonate the 5 inch Navy shells stored in the CONEX.

(C) Several IIRs published by this office during October and November 1966 reported VC plans to attack TSN AB and/or nearby US facilities while at the same time creating a diversionary incident in the area of downtown Saigon. For this reason, the attack directed against the base and the explosion on Le Van Duyet Street are possibly connected. The VC may have hoped to divert US Forces from TSN AB to downtown Saigon by attempting to create the impression that not only the base but the entire city was under attack.

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(C) Of the four VC wounded captured by Reaction Forces during the early morning of 4 December 1966, one died and the remaining three are undergoing interrogation by the VNAF Office of Investigation. Results of these interrogations will be published by this office as they become available.

(U) The information concerning damage to aircraft reflected in paragraphs 1 and 3, above, is classified SECRET to conform with the classification assigned by the 7th Air Force Director of Intelligence. The remaining information in cited paragraphs is classified CONFIDENTIAL.

(C) Reports received during the early morning of 4 December 1966 indicated the VC were firing on the base from mortar positions located north and west of the base. There has been no information developed to date which confirms this allegation.

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