

FROM: BSP

10 June 1967

SUBJECT: End of Tour Report (Lt Colonel Grove C. Johnson)

TO: 377th Cmbt Spt Gp (CBPO)

1. In accordance with PACAF Reg 35-8 and the 7th AF Supplement thereto, the following End of Tour Report is submitted for the period of 17 August 1966 to 5 August 1967 during which time I was assigned in the dual capacity of Chief of Security Police, 377th Combat Support Group and Commander, 377th Security Police Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam.

2. Introduction: The security of Tan Son Nhut Air Base presented many inherent problems which were further complicated by the language barrier. The various levels of interest, the international importance, plus the myriad of organizations and agencies involved, proved this to be a complicated, challenging tour. Most gratifying was the progress in all phases of security to the point where Tan Son Nhut is now considered to have one of the most formidable base defense systems found anywhere in the world today. Proven in combat, the Security Policemen have clearly demonstrated their ability to cope with the current tactics and techniques employed by the Viet Cong sapper unit. As an individual the Security Policeman is highly disciplined, well trained, aggressive, and carries out his duties with the minimum of supervision. The squadron commander in SEA is faced with peculiar problems: temptations, the one year tour, an excessive training work load, and the constant withdrawal of authority.

3. AS THE CHIEF OF SECURITY, TAN SON NHUT AB, RVN.

a. It is my firm belief that Tan Son Nhut Air Base is unique in Vietnam. Primarily for these reasons I feel it has an unusual political status and is a prime target in RVN worthy of special consideration.

(1) It is the only ICAO designated International Airport in RVN.

(2) It is the residence of Premier Ky.

(3) It's the airport for the Capital.

(4) It houses Headquarters 7th Air Force.

(5) It is the future home of Headquarters, Military Assistance Command Vietnam.

b. In the field of security many very significant improvements have been made at Tan Son Nhut. The need for greater coordination and security of the air base was forcefully demonstrated in the 13 April 1966 mortar attack by the Viet Cong. Since that time, Comm US MACV personally directed a study be made and then, when completed, personally reviewed, screened, and approved certain recommendations. So intense was his interest that he received a detailed briefing on the progress of the defense of Tan Son Nhut on a monthly basis.

c. The basic philosophy adopted for the defense of Tan Son Nhut was that all available resources should be utilized in a effective, coordinated plan to counter any enemy attack. The magnitude of such an undertaking is

apparent when the total number of independent agencies, Air Force and Army, civil and military, US and Vietnamese, are considered. This problem was further complicated with the varying numbers of transient and temporary units on the base. The base population fluctuates from an estimated 55,000 during the daytime to an estimated 25,000 at night. The approved recommendations of the study on the defense of Tan Son Nhut are what occupied ninety percent of the time of my operations staff. We immediately initiated work to develop a joint US Air Force - US Army defense plan. Agreement came easy on the job to be done but terminology had to be restricted to that understood and used by both US agencies. It was found that some of the doctrine designed for bases occupied solely by USAF personnel and resources had to be modified. Unique to Tan Son Nhut's plan was the Army Task Force 35 which consisted of 5 platoons which were placed under the operational control of the USAF Base Commander in a Yellow or Red Alert Condition. This plan was approved in October 1966. It's soundness was demonstrated during the 4-5 December 1966 attack on Tan Son Nhut. Successfully proven, it was used as the departure point for the Combined US - Vietnamese Defense Plan for the air base.

d. The defense plan envisions that the base will be attacked by the VC, undetected. Advance warning is an element that to this date cannot be counted on with any degree of reliability. As a result a constant defense posture is maintained, capable of detecting a hostile force, then holding that force until quick reaction elements can be maneuvered into position to overwhelm the opposition.

e. Most of the recommendations approved by MACV in July 1966 have been accomplished or are near completion.

(1) The perimeter fence has been reinforced and new barb wire entanglements installed.

(2) The old mine field has been removed and a new one installed around most of the perimeter.

(3) An effective perimeter lighting system has been installed and is operational.

(4) Towers have been armor plated, moved to strategic locations, and are manned with capable observers.

(5) Tower observers are equipped with Starlite Scopes.

(6) The eight and ten foot high elephant grass has been burned off and a plan is underway to control the growth of vegetation during the coming rainy season.

(7) A hardened command post for the Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area is nearing completion.

(8) The Combined Base Defense Plan for Tan Son Nhut is in its final stage of coordination.

(9) Two alert helicopters are in place on the air base. Their response time is less than five minutes.

f. Considerable progress was made in the field of Law Enforcement at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in the last year. Although still very heavy, vehicular traffic at least flows in a regular fashion. In addition, an Engineering Team from US Army Transportation Corps is programmed in to study the overall traffic scheme. It is hoped their recommendations, when implemented, will effect an even more orderly flow. The Vietnamese Base Commander has signified his support of this program and is looking forward to having the most progressive station in SEA.

g. The security clearance of Vietnamese Nationals continues to be a problem and I feel always will be until the Vietnamese population becomes some what geographically stabilized. At the present time a Vietnamese civilian only need find someone on-base who will sponsor him in order to get a base pass.

h. Pilferage and losses have been reduced. More attention to the accounting system and more positive supply controls now give a more accurate picture of losses. Formerly, because losses were difficult to prove on a timely basis, only the most flagrant cases were thoroughly investigated; now, each is followed through in a vigorous fashion. Physical security has improved considerably. Fences have been erected, entry and exit control points established, and there is a definite feeling of supply discipline that once existed only to a superficial degree.

i. Administrative security is now exercised with the same forceful measures as in the States; inspections are made on a very regular basis. Prior to my arrival in SEA it was not unusual to have a merchant wrap a package using a classified paper someone had removed from a trash can.

j. The storage of weapons has been given special attention. Today, a lost weapon is unusual. Strict accountability is maintained and only containers that meet a very exacting criteria are used. A periodic inspection system has been adopted to detect any weak areas. Corrective action, where required, is positive, immediate, and permanent.

k. The only confinement facility available is located at Long Bien and is operated by the US Army. With the increase in numbers and the corresponding increase in incidents, I feel a confinement facility and a vigorous correctional custody program are needed.

4. AS A COMMANDER.

a. As a former 7th Air Force Tactical Flying Squadron Commander I occupied almost a unique position to observe, judge, and compare the officers and men on an individual basis. The average airman today stationed at Tan Son Nhut is faced with temptations which collectively are as great or greater than those ever faced by any large group of men. Because of their culture, standard of living, and general outlook, women are plentiful. There is no effective control and a great number of airmen contracted venereal disease. Narcotics are plentiful and available. A pretense is made to keep them out of sight and off the street. The Vietnamese Police appear to be unconcerned, or if truly concerned, ineffective in curbing the narcotics traffic. The blackmarket is something everyone knows exists and few are not asked to participate. A shady deal can make a man \$50.00 when changing \$100.00 US green into MPCs. Alcoholic beverages are available to any airman over 21 to

purchase in the BX at only a fraction of the normal stateside prices. Liquor is rationed; however, anyone with determination can acquire very cheaply far beyond that recommended for social consumption. These temptations in combination face our young airmen on a daily basis. Even the hardest disciplinarians find some difficulties because of them in dealing with any large group of men. None of these problems faced me in my former command assignment; the only thought then was to get on with the job and make existence as comfortable as possible under the circumstances.

b. It is my contention that today's airmen under fire possesses the good balance of aggressiveness and determination, coupled with good common sense and the ability to analyze the situation. Some of my youngest airmen seem to have a better grasp of leadership than fairly senior NCOs formerly did.

c. The airman today is not only closely supervised but knows the highest leaders in the land are interested and sympathetic to his problems. Dignitaries, including the President of the United States, have visited the area on a continuing basis. Never before has so much emphasis been placed on his welfare in a Combat Zone. Perhaps the most dramatic expression of top side interest that I observed occurred on the morning of 4 December 1966. Immediately after the runway was reopened when the Viet Cong had been driven only a few hundred yards off, General Westmoreland landed in a helicopter in front of our Main Line of Resistance to personally survey the situation. This positive demonstration of personal interest in the importance of the airman on the front line left an everlasting impression.

d. The airman today is healthier than ever before (in spite of the high VD rate). The sick book seldom ever ran over one half of one percent in the 377th Security Police Squadron; the one exception was the casualties inflicted by a Viet Cong attack. Wide spread cases of dysentery and dengue are a thing of the past. This, I attribute primarily to the high standards of cleanliness in the mess halls and adequate washing and bathing facilities for the men. Running water was always available and most of the time hot as well as cold water.

e. Although on the surface the Status of Discipline appears to leave much to be desired, I believe this is primarily because of the professional performance we demand in today's Air Force, coupled with the temptations faced by each airman. The Article #15 of the UCMJ is being administered justly and properly. Minor infractions that were formerly overlooked or given only tacit disapproval are currently dealt with using the stateside yardstick. Because of the Viet Cong Threat, there are many unusual and exacting restrictions not normally imposed, i.e., curfew regulations. In addition, after reviewing many of the records I question whether units in CONUS are permitting only the best to come to SEA. In my opinion much credit for the high morale and professional competence to today's force is attributed to the sound, mature, and capable NCOs.

f. The current restriction to a one year tour in Vietnam I found to have both advantages and disadvantages. It requires that an individual must necessarily become a constructive asset to the organization with a minimum of local indoctrination. Judgement as to his worth to the organization a final assignment must be made early in his tour. Time is compressed.

In this regard I found some NCOs, who were absolutely superior in their Stateside assignments, were mediocre in the combat theater. Conversely, I found many, who had been considered mediocre by Stateside commanders, were my most effective leaders. Adaptability, ingenuity, initiative, and common sense are a necessity in an effective leader at the squadron level. The ability to motivate and inspire every last class airman is essential.

g. In my estimation formal recognition of leadership lags. Under the current personnel procedures the job an airman or NCO does in the theater is not normally reflected in his promotion folder and considered until he returns to CONUS. Except in an indirect manner has his commander any influence upon his early selection for promotion. I feel this problem deserves special consideration.

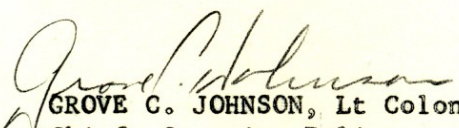
h. One year tours provide certain advantages. Personal planning is possible. The state of mind this security offers is an invaluable asset. Almost every individual knows and tries to do his best for the relatively short period of time he is in Vietnam. Stateside values are not permitted time to grow obsolete. I feel that, if the tour were extended appreciably, blackmarket activities, the use of narcotics, and involvement with Vietnamese women would increase considerably. It has been my experience that only a small percent of the voluntarily tour extensions have been requested because of purely patriotic reasons; I carefully screened each individual request. Most first termers requested extensions in order to qualify for an early out upon their return to CONUS. Some extensions were requested by individuals who were involved with Vietnamese women. Others, I had reason to suspect were tempted by blackmarket profits. The written request invariably indicates a keen idealistic desire, yet eyeball to eyeball interviews often disclose personal, selfish ambitions are predominant. This prompted the majority of my recommendations for disapproval.

i. In my opinion the training load required of the squadron was excessive. At one time we had more than 275 airmen and NCOs on OJT. With the limited training facilities, all constructed on a self-help basis; this imposed a burden that materially reduced the effort that could otherwise have been directed to the primary mission. The amount of training prior to arrival in SEA varied considerably because of the different CONUS bases that furnished inputs. Again, the relatively short tour complicated this problem. Fortunately, with capable, knowledgeable NCOs the squadron conducted this program with excellent results. I feel a certain amount of upgrade training develops a healthy atmosphere; however, if at all possible, inputs to SEA Security Police squadrons should be graduates of the Security Police School, obtaining their 77150 in CONUS prior to their departure. The Unit Training Standard 40-2 should be carefully reviewed. All items not specifically considered valid for training time while in SEA should be marked not applicable to SEA units. Some of these subjects are: fish and wildlife conservation, the basic concepts and objectives of the Prisoner Retraining Group and US Disciplinary Barracks (Fort Leavenworth). If omitted, it would permit the already overtaxed training section to devote more emphasis on those items needed to fulfill the unit's primary mission.

j, As a commander I feel the CBPO has ranged far beyond what was originally intended to accomplish. Today, it has developed into a decision making organization usurping what I feel should rightly be vested in the squadron commander. Although the decisions made were for the most part a rubber stamp of my recommendations, I feel the authority should continue to rest with the commander charged with the responsibility. The CBPO should function purely as a service organization. I cite the following as examples where at Tan Son Nhut Air Base the final decision rests with CBPO:

- (1) Check cashing privileges.
- (2) Approval for Emergency Leaves.
- (3) Counselling of airmen on the promotion system and his status in the system.
- (4) Designation of the categories of favorable correspondence.
- (5) Determination for destruction of derogatory files.
- (6) Approval for tour extension requests.

5. My telephone numbers are 3141 duty and 3141 billet. My DEROS is 16 August. I desire to debrief at Seventh Air Force on or about 3 August, at PACAF on or about 6 August, and at Headquarters USAF on or about 21 August.


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