

Air Force News

Saigon, Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base



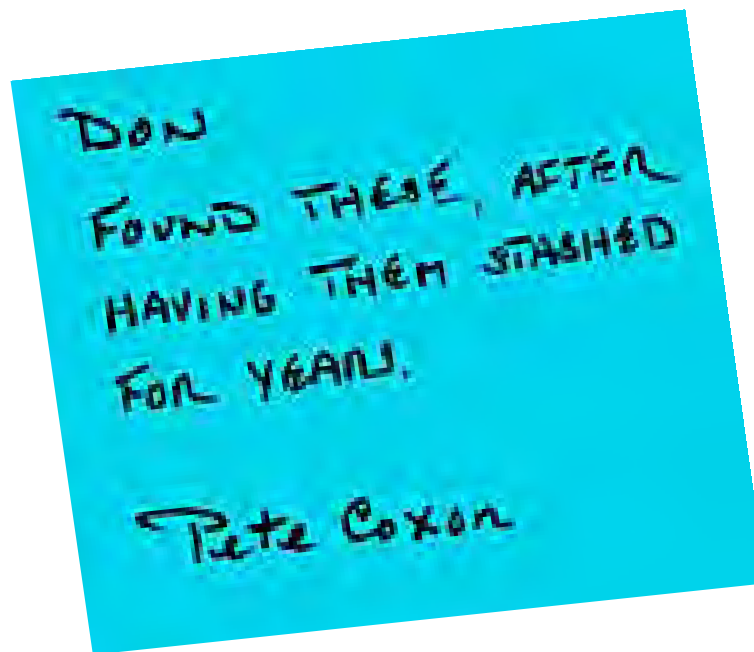
by **Peter W. Coxon**

Don Muang; 1965-1966

377th SPS, Tân Sơn Nhứt ; 66-67; 8th SPS, Ubon

67-68; 388th SPS, Korat; 68-69

Note



Article 1

11 VC Killed in New Fighting at Saigon Airport

SAIGON (AP) — Eleven Viet Cong were reported killed in fresh fighting at Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Air Base Sunday night and Monday morning as U.S. and Vietnamese troops mopped up remnants of a suicide force that had penetrated the big airport early Sunday.

U.S. headquarters said the new fights broke out at the west end of the main runway and near the airbase rear gate late Sunday night. Contact broke off Monday morning. U.S. casualties were light.

The spokesman said a U.S. C-130 transport plane encountered moderate to heavy automatic weapons fire

three miles from the main runway while making an approach early Monday, but was not hit.

U.S. headquarters also reported a terrorist threw a fragmentation grenade on the porch of a residence leased by the U.S. Air Force in Saigon. Headquarters said three Air Force personnel and a Vietnamese man were wounded and that the residence sustained light damage.

In the fighting on the edge of Tan Son Nhut, U.S. Army gunship helicopters supported the ground

troops in tracking down the Viet Cong raiders.

Flareships took to the air over the big base for the second consecutive night, lighting up a wide area on the edge of the South Vietnam capital.

The spokesman said there had been no mortar fire early Monday morning. All the action came from exchanges of small arms fire.

It was not clear whether the Viet Cong had made another attempt to penetrate the base.

Article 2



U. S. Air Force Police Search Tan Son Nhut Air Base for Remnants of a Suicide Viet Cong Platoon That Infiltrated the Field and Was Destroyed

U.S. Planes Pound Foe

Article 3

Reds Seize Part of An Loc



Compiled From AP, UPI
and S&S Vietnam Service

Related stories, Pages 2, 4

SAIGON—Waves of U.S. bombers carpeted the An Loc battlefield with fire and explosives Thursday, trying to smash Communist assaults that captured part of the provincial capital north of Saigon. The government troops there were surrounded and in danger of being overrun.

"There's a perimeter on the southern edge of town. That's about the only friendly place in this whole country up here," a U.S. pilot flying over the battleground radioed.

Communist troops and tanks, apparently at the price of heavy losses, braved all the bombs, bullets and shells that could

be brought to bear on them and drove deep into the town, 40 miles north of Saigon. Field reports said they also captured a nearby airfield, making resupply and reinforcement of the 12,000 government troops, or what was left of them, extremely hazardous.

About 30,000 North Vietnamese troops launched twin ground attacks against An Loc. Military sources quoted the Reds as saying the city would become the Viet Cong's "capital" in one week.

Government soldiers, with the help of heavy bombing and strafing runs, beat off the first attack and reported destroying 20 Communist tanks.

At nightfall, however, a second assault forced fighting inside the city and the North Vietnamese (Continued on Back Page, Col. 1)

Article 4

Elite Viets Sent to Lift An Loc Siege

(Continued From Page 1)

R. Laird stopped just short of calling it that when he told a Washington news conference that American air attacks will continue against North Vietnam until Hanoi pulls its troops back across the Demilitarized Zone and shows a willingness to negotiate peace.

Official sources here said the raids over the north would become more intense in the future.

These sources said preliminary analysis shows the raids over the north are inflicting heavy damage on highways, bridges, surface-to-air missile sites and antiaircraft artillery batteries.

"It looks good," said one source. "We are experiencing a great deal of success."

The U.S. command so far has not publicly assessed the bombing damage and has released only scant details on the strikes.

Meanwhile, the U.S. 7th Fleet sent its flagship, the guided missile cruiser Oklahoma City, to join the Chicago in bomb-

ardment of the coastline. Five 7th Fleet destroyers also are on line off the coast bombarding Communist positions on both sides of the DMZ.

A fifth aircraft carrier, possibly the Midway, was reported preparing to join the 7th Fleet, which is launching planes from four aircraft carriers—the Kitty Hawk, Constellation, Coral Sea and Hancock.

One squadron of F105 jet attack planes has been ordered to Indochina from McConnell Air Force Base in Kansas, and a number of other air units from several states have been alerted for possible deployment to the war zone.

An armada of U.S. B52 Stratofortresses and smaller tactical fighter-bombers unleashed hundreds of tons of explosives on North Vietnamese tanks and troops trying to seize the provincial capital of An Loc after overrunning the district town of Loc Ninh 15 miles to the north.

U.S. and South Vietnamese fighter-bombers attacked a column of 30 Soviet-built PT76 light amphibious tanks between Loc Ninh and An Loc and knocked out half of them, field reports said.

Lead elements of three North Vietnamese divisions were reported less than two miles from the government garrison of 5,000 troops, so close that they forced back a U.S. helicopter trying to evacuate wounded American advisers and killed one crewman. The three wounded advisers were successfully lifted out 15 hours later.

Fighting was reported on all sides of An Loc and the defenders were being heavily shelled.

Civilians who fled from Loc Ninh to An Loc told government troops that the North Vietnamese were trying to capture An Loc to establish a provisional revolutionary government under the banner of the Viet Cong.

They ordered the Saigon forces to hold the provincial capital at any cost and released

his own palace guard to help lift the siege.

The brigade of 2,500 paratroopers moved by truck into the Lai Khe base camp, 25 miles north of Saigon, then set out on foot to clear Highway 13 en route to An Loc.

South Vietnamese officers in the field told Associated Press photographer Koichiro Morita that smaller sized North Vietnamese units were all along Highway 13 between An Loc and the district town of Chon Thanh, 15 miles to the south.

"We are under heavy pressure and are abandoning some of our outposts to strengthen our position," said Maj. Tran Al Quoc, the commander of the Chon Thanh garrison.

Article 5

VC Charges Found In Air Base Ammo

S&S Vietnam Bureau

SAIGON—Two satchel charges that failed to explode were found in an ammunition storage area of Tan Son Nhut AB near the spot where U.S. Air Police two days earlier repulsed Viet Cong guerrillas raids.

A military spokesman said a 62-pound charge was found Tuesday during a search of the area.

The charge had an 11-hour fuse, the spokesman said, but there was no indication as to when it had been placed in the ammo dump. It didn't explode because the timing device failed to function.

Wednesday morning, a second 62-pound charge was found in the same area. Both charges were disarmed.

The ammunition storage area where the charges were found is on the west side of the sprawling air base. The Viet Cong raiding party, which entered the base during an enemy mortar attack Sunday, got into a nearby area from the northwest side of the field. In the two raids, 30 Viet Cong were killed.

Article 6

3 Guard Dogs Die Defending Saigon Air Base

SAIGON (AP)—A German shepherd dog named Rebel, hurling his 100 pounds of bone and muscle at the shadowy figures moving in the grass, was the first line of defense.

Rebel's strong jaws snapped across the throat of one of the Viet Cong infiltrators, stifling a scream. His hind legs kicked at the midriff of another.

But Rebel, a sentry dog, was soon dead.

"When I let him loose, I had a notion that he might get shot," said his handler, A2C Leroy Marsh, one of the sentries who patrol the blackness of Saigon's Tan Son Nhut AB at night beyond the floodlit airstrips.

Marsh, 33, added sadly, "But I had to send Rebel out there. The VC were all around, I had to throw in everything, the dog, shots. I had to make time so the others could organize."

Two other sentry dogs were killed as they tried to stem the surge of a suicide force of Viet Cong across the northwest corner of the air base Sunday morning.

The dogs were gunned down as the infiltrators began a headlong rush to cross the main airport runway and get past the line of sandbagged bunkers that make up the main line of defense, then penetrate the flight line where scores of jet fighters and transport aircraft are located.

Only one Viet Cong got through, testimony to the defense by 50 American Air Policemen, who fought the guerrillas to a standstill, killing 13 of them and capturing four.

Airman Marsh, patrolling off the northwest end of the main 10,000-foot airstrip, was the first to notice the infiltrators.

"They were padding along 50 yards out," he said.

"Rebel didn't alert me because the wind was blowing in the wrong direction. But she saw them when I did."

Marsh called urgently into his radio, unclipped Rebel's leash, and slithered back to his waist-high sandbagged bunker.

A grenade blasted the silence, fragments hitting Marsh's section leader who was driving 100 yards away.

"Then it all came in — mortars, rockets, grenades, machine gun fire," Marsh said. "I dropped to my knees and kept firing."

Marsh was not hit as the Viet Cong infiltrators swept past him towards the main line of defense, the Air Police bunkers spaced 20 yards apart on the flight line side of the main airstrip. Each of the bunkers held one M60 machine gun and two automatic rifles. These weapons cut the attacking Viet Cong to pieces.

Article 7

U.S. to Step Up Sweeps in Saigon Area

SAIGON (AP)—The Viet Cong assault on heavily defended Tan Son Nhut Air Base probably will spur an intensified campaign to clean out guerrillas in the countryside around Saigon.

Such a campaign was being prepared even before a Viet Cong suicide squad breached the base's security perimeter at 1:30 a.m. Sunday under cover of darkness.

'Revenge,' VC Claim

TOKYO (AP)—The Viet Cong Sunday said the assault on Saigon's big air base and U.S. military facilities in the city was "a practical deed to avenge the people of Hanoi and north Vietnam as a whole."

The Viet Cong warned that "for each blow dealt by the U.S. aggressors at north Vietnam, the South Vietnam armed forces and people will deal five or 10 return blows at them in the south."

The statement was made by the spokesman of the South Vietnam National Front for the Liberation Central Committee, political arm of the Viet Cong.

It was relayed by the Viet Cong's "liberation press agency" and distributed by Hanoi's Viet Nam News Agency in a broadcast translated here.

Senior officers said the 1st Inf. Div. and the 25th Inf. Div. will bear down on antiguerrilla operations in the region surrounding the capital.

About 15 per cent of such operations will be at night, when the Viet Cong are most active.

One general said he believes the intensified sweeps will disclose a heavier concentration of guerrillas close to Saigon than had been suspected.

The attack on Tan Son Nhut, on the outskirts of Saigon, showed careful preparation, reconnaissance and planning.

The guerrilla force of about 20 men made its move under cover of a barrage of more than 40 mortar rounds.

Apparently by studying the layout, the Viet Cong found a chink in the protective screen—an open drainage ditch in which they entered.



A Vietnamese soldier displays the Chinese communist weapons and munitions captured from a Viet Cong platoon that infiltrated Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon.

(AP Radiophoto)

Article 8

RECORD AMERICAN, BOSTON, SATURDAY, JAN. 21, 1967

Map of U.S. Billets Found in Cong Fort

SAIGON (UPI)—U. S. troops poking through an underground maze of tunnels below the Ho Bo woods just North of Saigon Friday discovered a detailed map pinpointing U. S. billets in the capital and a master plan for destruction of the Tan Son Nhut airport. The discovery in three-mile long tunnels at the edge of the Iron Triangle was announced as Air Force spokesmen disclosed American planes charged up Hanoi's danger-packed "MIG Alley" Thursday to within 15 miles of the off limits buffer zone separating North Vietnam from China.

Reports from the 196th light infantry brigade whose tunnel role are sweeping through the Communist stronghold said even the Continental hotel, a Saigon landmark dating from French colonial days, was marked in blue pencil on the detailed chart.

It is a commercial hotel now and its wide verandas are mostly jammed with U. S. newsmen and other civilians.

The 196th Light Infantry discovered the vast tunnel two days ago and have made its way only about halfway through it. It is located in the Ho Bo woods — long a Communist sanctuary — and on the fringes

of the Iron Triangle 10 miles northwest of Saigon.

Brig. Gen. Richard T. Knowles, commander of the 196th, described it as a main base camp for guerrilla bands operating in the capital area. The United States launched its biggest operation of the war against the Red sanctuary on Jan. 8 and so far has killed more than 600 Viet Cong in operation Cedar Falls.

Knowles said his men found a detailed plan of the Dec. 4 attack on the Tan Son Nhut airbase, the most important U. S. and Vietnamese military facility in Vietnam, with details of how best to destroy the sprawling complex.

In the Dec. 4 raid about 60 guerrillas invaded the air base before dawn and actually penetrated the perimeter before being hurled back by U. S. mili-

tary police and Vietnamese guards. More than 20 guerrillas were killed trying to reach the long lines of sleek jets parked in revetments along the airport aprons.

Two underground forts were among a score of base camps uncovered by troops in operation Cedar Falls.

Lt. Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu, South Vietnam's chief of state, visited the area Friday and observed troops in action and the relief program now underway for 6000 refugees evacuated ahead of the American advance through the heavy jungle.

Military spokesmen reported 585 guerrillas killed by actual body count and estimated 152 strikes had killed perhaps 200 more. But the real story of the success of the operation lay in the number of fortifications and amounts of food and ammunition seized.

Article 9

7TH AIR FORCE NEWS

FRIDAY, DEC. 23, 1966

MACV Commander Praises Tan Son Nhut Air Police

TAN SON NHUT — Gen. William C. Westmoreland commander, Military Advisory Command Vietnam, in a recent congratulatory letter to Lt. Gen. William W. Momyer, commander, 7th Air Force, praised members of the 377th Air Police Squadron for their outstanding part in the defense of this base earlier this month.

General Westmoreland, in his message, noted "Alert patrolling, rapid response, and stout-hearted defense put up by members of the Tan Son Nhut Security Force on Dec. 4-5 are worthy of the highest praise.

"The 377th Air Police Squadron", the general continued, "decimated a strong infiltration

force, inflicting a severe defeat on the enemy and making him pay a heavy price for minimum damage inflicted."

"Your brave airmen fought with courage and distinction," General Westmoreland concluded. "Please pass my hearty congratulations to all concerned."

General Momyer forwarded General Westmoreland's message to Col. Grover K. Coe, commander, 377th Combat Support Group, with the following observation: "I reiterate, the professionalism, courage and cooperation displayed by personnel of the 377th Air Police Squadron were of the first magnitude.

"Heralds displayed will long be remembered by both the free world forces and more especially, the force that is fighting to destroy the way of life of our free people."

Colonel Coe, in a separate letter to all units under his command, acquainted them with the congratulatory messages from Generals Westmoreland and Momyer. At the same time, he commended members of the 377th Dispensary and the 377th Supply Squadron's explosive ordnance disposal team, who reacted immediately and positively in support of the air police.

We Take Care of Our Own