

VICTORY IN BATTLE BUNKER HILL-10, BATTLE OF BIEN HOA Biên Hòa Airbase - TẾT, 31 January 1968

By LTC Kenton Miller
Squadron Commander,
3rd Security Police Squadron

Biên Hòa Air Base - Tết 1968:

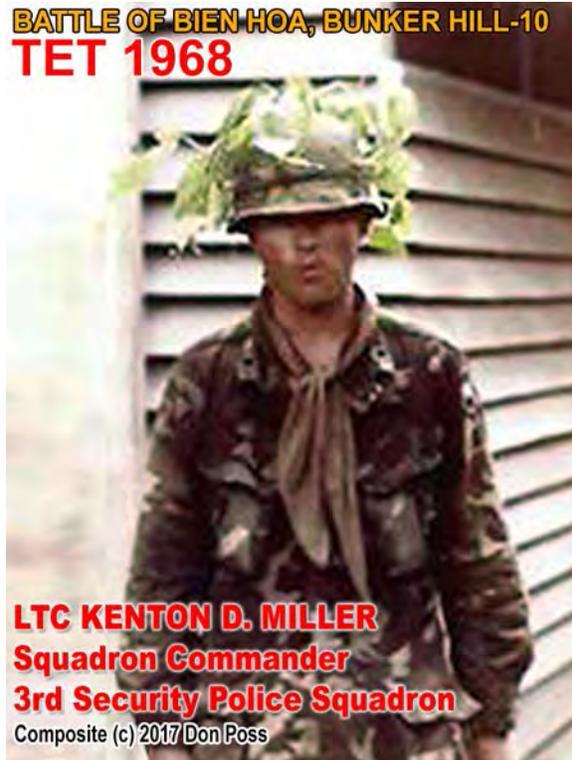
Victory in battle can be measured in a variety of ways. Territory captured or defended and casualty losses verses enemy losses are probably the two most frequent measures of success in battle. Using these criteria, the battle won by the 3rd Security Police Squadron during Tết, 1968, can only be measured as a stirring victory. The battle took place in Biên Hòa Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, during the North Vietnam *Tết Offensive*, January/ February 1968. The 3rd Security Police Squadron killed and captured 160 enemies, while losing two of their own, for a kill/capture ratio of 80-1.

The battle started with a long rocket-mortar barrage. Undercover of the barrage, the enemy maneuvered undetected through the mined double-chain-link perimeter fence line until detected by a sentry dog [Diablo X313, KIA] and his handler Robert (Bob) Press (WIA).

Lt Col Miller, using the law enforcement desk sergeant's handheld radio because the rocket attack had knocked out the power to CSC, told the handler to pop a handheld slap flare and see what he could see. After a few seconds, Miller heard the stunned handler report, "My God—they are everywhere!" Another K-9 handler and the men posted inside Bunker Hill-10, an old French-built reinforce concrete bunker on the east side of the base, confirmed the penetration and reported that they were exchanging small arms fire with the intruders.

The enemy's initial thrust was impeded by sentry dogs and their handlers, bunkers manned by SP machine gunners and riflemen, Sabotage Alert Teams (SAT) with jeeps-mounted M-60 machine guns and Quick Reaction Forces (QRF) riflemen. The enemy advance was halted at the Engine Buildup with a counter attack led by an NCO. The 3rd Security Police Squadron bunkers were bypassed, and in some cases surrounded, but *none* were overrun.

**BATTLE OF BIEN HOA, BUNKER HILL-10
TET 1968**

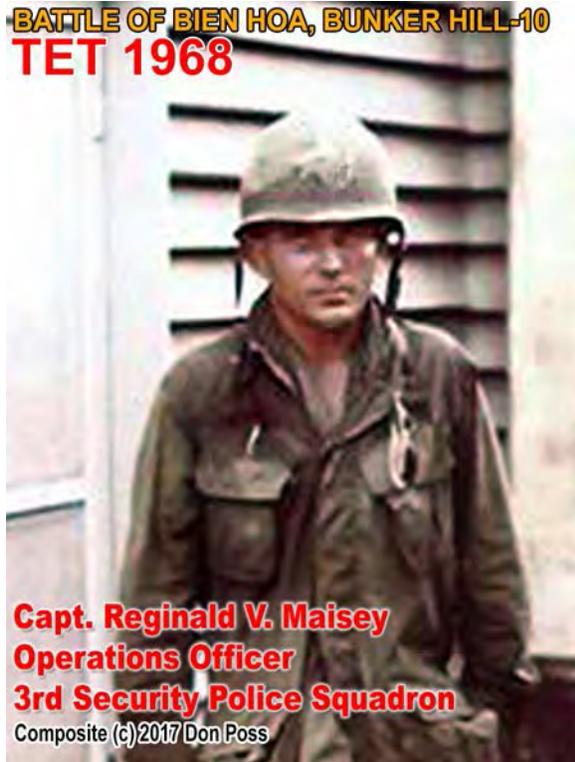


LTC KENTON D. MILLER
Squadron Commander
3rd Security Police Squadron
Composite (c) 2017 Don Poss

*Biên Hòa Air Base: LTC Kenton D. Miller,
Squadron Commander, 3rd Security Police
Squadron. TET 1968.*

The combined NVA/VC (North Vietnam Army /Viet Cong) of approximately 1,500 enemy troops were attacking the base, and the 3rd Security Police Squadron had only about 350 SPs and 75 augmentees to oppose them. Nevertheless, the NVA/VC forces fought their way on base only as far as the Aircraft Engine Buildup area, (approximately 50/60 yards from the riveted F-100 aircraft), with the SPs taking them under heavy fire all the way.

**BATTLE OF BIEN HOA, BUNKER HILL-10
TET 1968**



Capt. Reginald V. Maisey
Operations Officer
3rd Security Police Squadron
Composite (c) 2017 Don Poss

Photo Left: Battle of Bien Hoa, Bunker Hill-10, Biên Hòa Air Base: Capt. Reginald V. Maisey (KIA), TET 31 Jan 1968.

One of the SP KIA's (the 3rd SPS Operations Officer, Capt. Maisey], received a direct hit by a shoulder-fired-rocket launcher (RPG), while directing the defense of an old French bunker [Bunker Hill-10] on the perimeter. Fighting continued until dawn when the Flight Commander [Capt. Strones] formed a skirmish line and drove the enemy, not already killed or wounded, back across the base perimeter.

The perimeter fence line was 10 miles in length and although the ground attack only came from the east side, sniper fire was received from other directions most notably from north perimeter which was adjacent to the city of Biên Hòa.

The other SP KIA was an Augmentee (*about 75 Augmentees had been trained by the SPs to help defend the base*).



A1C Edward Grady Muse
3rd SPS Augmentee
KIA Bien Hoa AB, TET 31 Jan 1968

A1C Edward Grady Muse, Augmentee, was KIA by a Viet Cong grenade during a sudden clash as VC were about to exit a culvert drain beneath a road near Bunker Hill-10, just as 3rd SPS SP's suddenly approached it.

During the fight at the engine buildup area. Fighting continued until dawn when the Flight Commander [Capt. Strones] formed a skirmish line and drove the enemy, not already killed or wounded, back across the base perimeter.

Photo Above: Battle of Bien Hoa, Bunker Hill-10, Biên Hòa Air Base: A1C Edward Grady Muse (KIA), TET 31 Jan 1968.

[The 3rd Security Police Squadron conducted two sweeps (Perimeter & Interior) within the base, captured 25 wounded or surrendering prisoners (turned over to ARVN QC), and killed those combative VC/NVA who continued to fight. [See Vietnam Breaking News/NVA Mass-grave; 150 remains recovered at Bien Hoa Airport.](#)]

Army ground forces did not arrive until after day break, when only enemy wounded and fighting-stragglers were left on the base. No Army of South Vietnam (ARVN) personnel were present during *any part* of the battle. The US Army unit pursued the enemy outside the perimeter and drove them back into the jungle.

The Security Police Squadron had zero crew-serviced weapons, the M-60 machine gun being the heaviest weapons authorized. Fortunately, the Army 145th Combat Aviation Battalion was stationed on Biên Hòa Air Base, and throughout the battle gave *unwavering air-support* to the 3rd Security Police; without the 145th's support undoubtedly the squadron would have taken additional casualties. [At critical points of fighting the 145th CAB's aerial unrelenting fire-power decimated the enemy outside and on the perimeter wire, as the 3rd Security Police Squadron checked their advance and broke their mission against Biên Hòa Air Base.]

In addition to **no** crew-serviced weapons, **no** armored vests, **no** perimeter lighting, gasoline filled drums, claymore mines **or** searchlights to cover enemy approach routes; we [3rd SPS] had **zero** armored vehicles, **but only** [had] jeeps, pick-up trucks and stake trucks borrowed from the motor pool for QRT's.

Fortunately, 7th AF (Air Force) placed the squadron on maximum alert that afternoon prior to the attack, *but we were not told why*, so many of us thought this was just a prolonging of the many false intelligence reports received in the past.

After Action reports listed the enemy forces at two battalions and a reinforced CO [of 1500 VC/NVA; 60% were NVA]. This meant the [3rd Security Police Squadron] squadron was outnumbered 4 or 5 to one, as our Present for Duty (PFD), including Augmentees, were around 400 - 425.



*Bien Hoa Air Base, Tet, 31 January 1968:
Arming/De-arming Shack, after the Battle of Bien Hoa.*

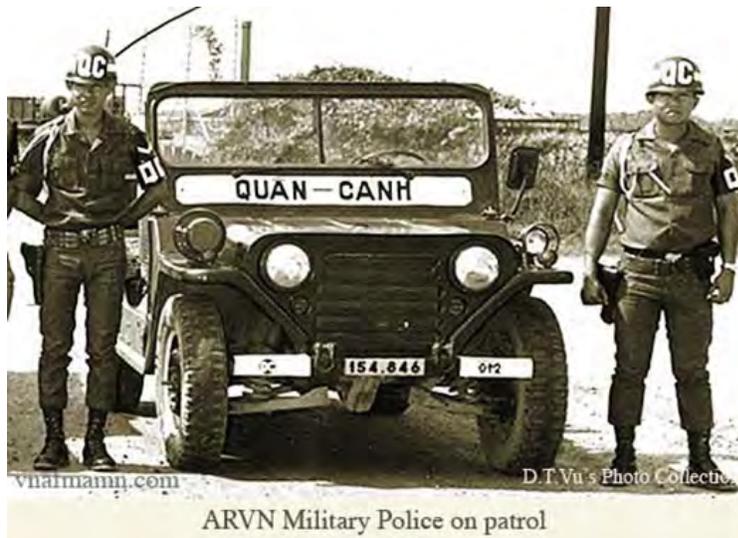


Bien Hoa Air Base, 3rd Security Police, borrowed a recoilless rifle, like the one above, from ARVN to take-out the still fighting NVA/VC in the De-arming Shack.

The Security Police were prohibited from operating outside the perimeter. The Army was responsible for security outside the perimeter. The official scenario was that we would never be attacked by more than a platoon

At one point during the battle, the SP squadron borrowed a recoilless rifle team from the QC (ARVN QC/Quan Canh: Army of the Republic of Vietnam, Military Police), to dislodge some enemy holdup in a shack.

BELOW PHOTO: *Battle of Biên Hòa, Bunker Hill-10: At one point during the battle, the SP squadron borrowed a recoilless rifle team from ARVN QC., to kill or capture enemy inside the USAF Arming/De-arming Shack...which is the furthest the penetrated the perimeter.*



On previous occasions when the Squadron had conducted night ambushes or perimeter sweeps, the Squadron Commander was called in and told to halt such operations as the Army had everything outside the perimeter under control. Prior to the attack, higher authorities were notified that the majority of the time no Army was securing the perimeter. The Squadron Commander was told otherwise

and to keep the squadron inside the perimeter.

The only official exception was that 50 SP squadron members were granted permission to attend the 173rd Airborne Brigade's week-long training they gave all of their new troops. The training climaxed with a helicopter assault into the base, a night defensive perimeter, and a search mission back to the base.

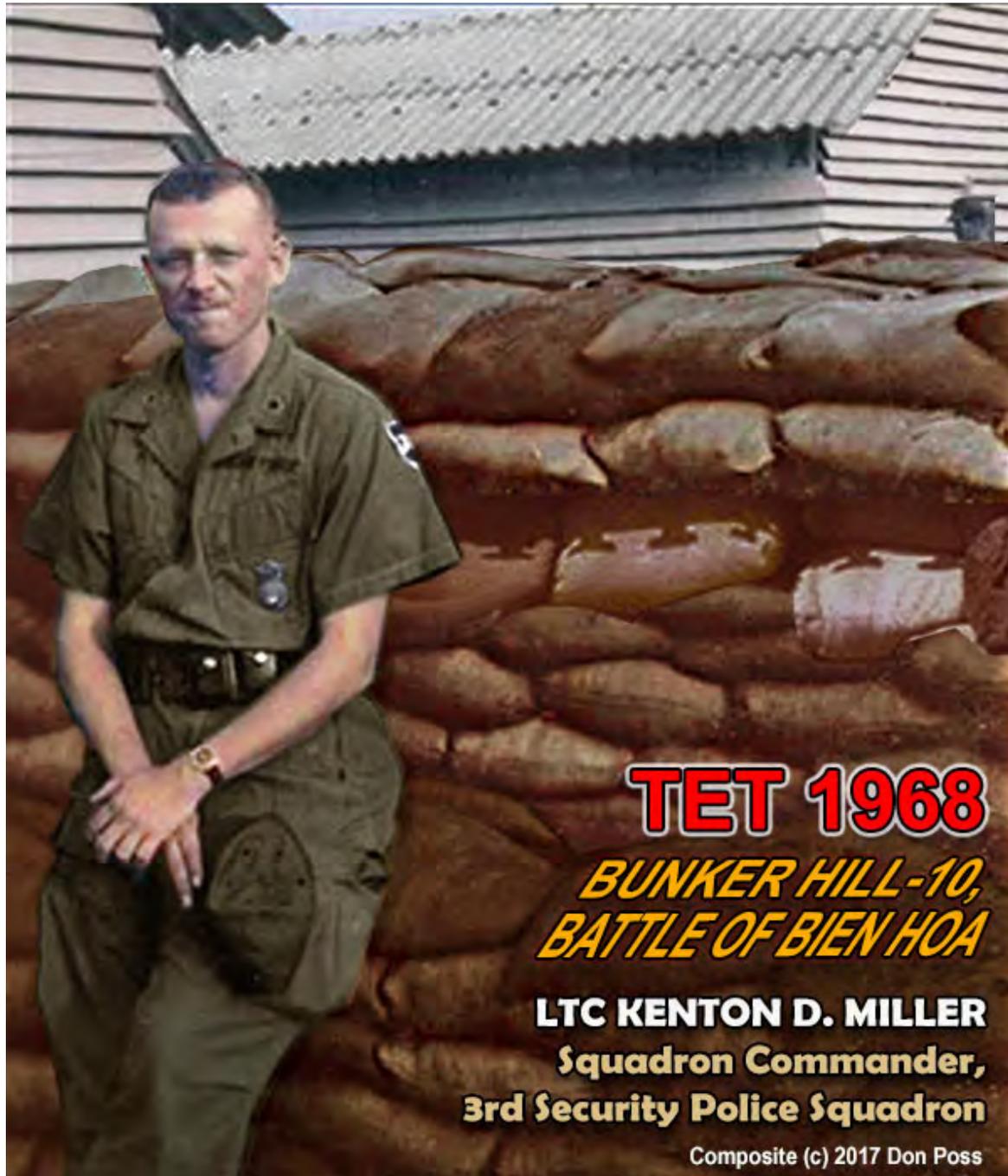
The 173rd main base was tied into the Air Base and was also attacked during Tết. The Division replaced the 173rd earlier, but they only had a rifle CO and MP's at their base camp and were hard pressed to defend their area.

Tết [1968] was not the [3rd Security Police Squadron] squadron's first encounter with the enemy. During 1967, numerous enemy sapper teams (sabotage team) were stopped at the perimeter and sometimes in brisk fire fights. In August 1967, the squadron captured their first prisoner in one of those firefights.

Numerous decorations were awarded squadron personnel as a result of the Tết battle, including an Air Force Cross, Silver Stars, and Bronze Stars with the Valor devise. I do not know the total number of decorations awarded as I rotated prior to any being awarded. Also,

I do not know the disposition of the 10 or 12 wounded, as the most critical were evacuated off base immediately after the battle.

I am aware that due to the bravery, ability and devotion to duty of the Junior Officers, NCOs and Airmen, the 3rd Security Police Squadron were *not* out-fought. Although out-gunned and out-numbered, they were ready and willing when called upon to do their duty. They thought they were the best – *and proved it.*



LTC Kenton D. Miller, Squadron Commander, 3rd Security Police Squadron, TET 1968, Bunker Hill-10, Battle of Bien Hoa, Bien Hoa Air Base.