

TẾT 1968

BUNKER HILL-10

31 Jan 1968

Jim Lebowitz, Sgt.

3rd Security Police Squadron, LED (Law Enforcement Desk Sergeant)

On 31 Jan 1968, at 0300 hours, we were hit by rockets and mortars and within a minute

Bien Hoa Air Base, Tet 1968: Jim Lebowitz, Sgt. 3rd Security Police Squadron, LED (Law Enforcement Desk, and backup for Central Security Control, USAF CSC.



or so, CSC (Central Security Control) lost all power, and I took over for CSC duties at the LED (Law Enforcement Desk). Within about five to ten minutes, and while still under rocket attack, LTC Kent Miller, 3rd SPS Squadron Commander, came running in the back door of the LED building. He was still in the process of getting dressed and took over the radio and told me to continue with the plotting and maps updates with Army on the HT500 radio we had.

LTC Miller first went to CSC but because they were off line he went to the LED and took over the radio. He did not come into the field to direct the fight as he knew he had good officers and NCOs out there that could do the job.

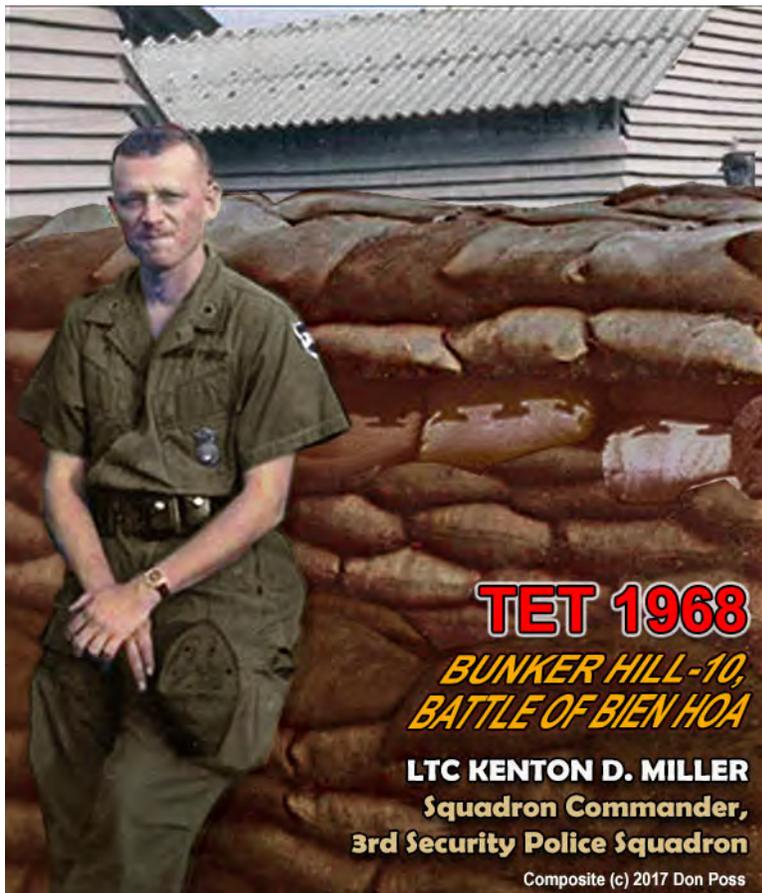
When LTC Miller got on the radio, he calmed everyone down by talking to them as if sitting across from each SP and Augmentee, one on one! He did his radio thing and let his CSC/LED folks do all the controlling and posting of info, which helped a lot. His presence on the radio definitely had a calming effect.

At first, I was concerned about a possible sapper attack, mainly because during Tết 1968's VC/NVA attack on Biên Hòa Air Base, there were no SP guards posted outside CSC nor LED. The Law Enforcement Desk was relatively close to the flight line, and I could clearly hear weapons fire and rocket and mortars impacting in the area; weapons fire and other explosions were also very clear and easily heard when receiving radio transmissions. Also, quite a few rockets hit in the barracks area not far from the LED. Nevertheless, my concern abated within an hour into the attack. Radio traffic was very light in areas not under direct attack...and without any urging, radio discipline was great.

About two hours into the attack, I felt confident that we were winning. I was concerned with the LED safety throughout the attack. My main concern was the real possibility for taking a direct hit by a rocket, as several rockets had hit close to the LED. Keep in mind that the LED was no more than a large hooch and not a hardened structure. We had no realistic plans for defending the LED if attacked by enemy penetrators. I was only armed with a .38 Cal revolver. There was no plan I was knowledgeable of for another location to take over base defense, if the LED was taken out.

Throughout the attack and into the next morning I was using the HT 500 Radio and in contact with the Tactical Operations Centers (TOC) for the 101st ABN and the Army Liaison at Đồng Nai. About 30 minutes into the ground attack I was called by the US Army Artillery Battery at Đồng Nai; also in our province N/E of Saigon and just east of the Biên Hòa Air Base. Some Army Artillery Lieutenant radioed CSC wanting the coordinates of Bunker Hill-10, so they could lie in artillery.

I knew that QRT and Reserve SAT had supporting Airmen in defensive positions around the



LTC Kenton Miller, Squadron Commander, 3rd Security Police Squadron. Tet 1968. Composite 2017 by Don Poss.

been Capt. Strones) called in about Air Support. I contacted the Đồng Nai TOC and shortly thereafter the Army 145th Aviation Battalion was in action with helicopter gunships.

bunker, and along with Bunker Hill-10 were actively engaged with the enemy. *Defense-5 and 6* were resupplying ammo and flares at perimeter bunkers, and there was no way to know exactly where everyone was as the base attack unfolded on the east-end. So, I told the LT that everyone was too close-in for artillery, and it would not be practical. The Army LT screamed, "*Who the hell is running that show?*" and demanded to speak with the officer in charge.

I told LTC Miller what was going on and gave him the handset. He listened for a minute or so and his succinct response was, "*Bullshit.*" He shook his head and handed the mic back to me and said, "*Screw him, Buddha.*" They never mentioned artillery again.

After the matter of artillery was settled, someone (it may have

The attack would quickly escalate and we would later ask for support from the Army 145th Aviation Battalion, and they responded near day break and finished off many of the enemy. By about 0730 or so, the main fighting was over, but killing by both sides would continue.

During Tết 1968, there was only sporadic fire at the Main Gate and VNAF Gate, which were manned jointly by USAF Security Police and VNAF QC. However, about two weeks after TẾT, the Main Gate began to receive heavy fire from nearby Biên Hòa City. I contacted the US Liaison officer at Đồng Nai which was adjacent to the base and he had Vietnamese Army sweep in from the town itself. Before dawn, all firing stopped. I don't know if the sniper(s) were killed or just blended into the town. No bodies were found. Also, there were no USAF or VNAF injuries there.



Biên Hòa Air Base, Main Gate and Water Tower. Composite by Don Poss