

Battle of Biên Hòa Bunker Hill-10
TWO MASS-GRAVES LOCATED
Biên Hòa Air Base / Biên Hòa Airport
 by Don Poss, VSPA LM37



Battle of Biên Hòa, Bunker Hill-10

Open Mass Grave: Composite Graphic Art compiled by Don Poss, © 2017, from the description of events by VSPA members who served with the 3rd Security Police Squadron during Tết 1968 at Biên Hòa Air Base.

It was The Year of the Monkey, when the Battle of Biên Hòa began at 0300 hours, 31 January 1968, with a savage rocket barrage and ferocious ground assault upon Bunker Hill-10. Only now does the Reaper draw the final curtain, just shy of fifty years. In April 2017, the Vietnam and American Search Team discovered the forgotten mass-grave site and its gruesome battle-casualty remains of over 150 Viet Cong and NVA soldiers, killed during the Tet attack. U.S. Air Force veterans of that battle helped locate the gravesite.

A half-century has passed since the infamous 1968 TẾT Offensive, a date every Vietnam War veteran remembers well; none moreso than Biên Hòa Air Base defenders of the 3rd Security Police Squadron. On that TẾT date, 1,400 NVA and Viet Cong troops furiously attacked the base, and for them the price was high with a battle tithe of over ten percent of the attackers killed in action. Sixty bodies lay scattered before and around Bunker Hill-10. 150 enemy bodies of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army soldiers were taken

from the battlefield and mass-buried in an unmarked dirt pit—its location faded with the passing decades.

Decades became generations, during which nature began its transformation of the war-torn scarred battlefield into an overgrown field of tangle-brush and tall grass—it would never return to the once peaceful marsh-like meadow it was meant to be; instead encroaching homes, businesses, and civilian airlines landing and taking off from Biên Hòa Airport became the norm; where once soared fighter-bombers from the massive-eagle's lair of Biên Hòa Air Base. Still, retiring veterans revisited memories, and some were stirred about what had happened that Tết 1968, and in time a Vietnam and American joint body-recovery search team, assisted partially by two U.S. veterans (flown in by helicopter to help identify the location of the grave, which was dug by South Vietnam soldiers), discovered the long-forgotten mass grave—plus a second larger mass-grave a few miles further east.

After the war, Vietnam was trying to reunify its country and recover its own war dead. No one in the Biên Hòa area knew what had actually happened, and the actual location of the Biên Hòa Air Base gravesite was mostly forgotten. Nevertheless, members of the Vietnam Security Police Association, Inc. (USAF) who served as 3rd Security Police, or augmentees, and as combatants during Tết 1968, did remember and reported seeing an open mass grave in the area at the east end of the runway. They recalled seeing NVA and VC soldiers' bodies scattered across the tall grass fields, and some recalled that remains were observed being loaded on a trailer by captured NVA and VC soldiers, for transportation from the battlefield to the open mass grave "pit" for burial. They also remembered that some of the bodies may have been burned prior to interment, either from battlefield grass fires, or in the pit itself. During fierce fighting, it was known that grassfires were set in order to successfully encourage the surrender of then concealed enemy in the tall grass. Also, on the night of 31 Jan 1968, 3rd SPS K-9 handlers stood patrol and guard over the open pit containing enemy bodies.

2017, Biên Hòa Province, Vietnam

On April 17, 2017 (Memorial Day), Vietnam reported Dong Nai provincial officials, had searched for the mass grave of the airport area for years, based on witnesses and old maps. They also flew two U.S. veterans by helicopter to help identify the location of the grave, which was dug by South Vietnam soldiers."

Together, the governments of Vietnam and the United States of America, narrowed the casualty body recovery search of the American/Vietnam War, and located two mass-graves in the areas near the Biên Hòa Airport (formally Biên Hòa Air Base).

Vietnam recently reported locating a mass gravesite containing remains of 150 NVA and 1968. A second mass grave burial pit was also found a few miles east of the airport, Viet Cong who died while attacking the Air Base (east end,) during the war and Tết, 31 January containing over 400 bodies, likely buried by the US Army after the Tết 31 Jan 1968 battle.

Who had dug the open grave pit? Speculation was that the US Army may have dug the gravesite, but no heavy equipment was observed doing so. A Vietnam news article reported South Vietnamese soldiers had dug the mass grave).



Tết 31 Jan 1968, Battle of Biên Hòa: Bunker Hill-10, with a small trailer that may have been used by NVA/VC POWs to load comrades' bodies in that area and move them to the "pit" for mass burial.

Barry Lyon's (Augmentee A1C then, and now, Major, retired) commented upon seeing captured NVA and VC loading bodies of fallen comrades on to a wagon, or trailer, and transported to the burial site at the east end of the runway. Barry Lyon's wrote:

"I finally was released [from augmentee duties] and walked from the Bunker up the road to near the F-102 Delta Dagger area. When I got there, I sat down on the edge of the ramp, and in the warm sun fell asleep—exhausted. I don't know how long I dozed off, but I woke to the sound of voices and a vehicle pulling a wagon nearby—it was the captured enemy loading their dead. The wagon was pretty full—maybe 40 bodies with numerous wounds from head to toe...I stood there a few moments wondering what their stories were...and whether their families would ever know what had happened to them." Barry Lyons

Since the war ended officially in 1975, Vietnam has assisted in locating many bodies of American and allied forces for return home. For most families, the return of their loved one closed a difficult chapter for the surviving family and fellow Americans.

Nevertheless, Barry Lyon's remark continued regarding the POWs loading their dead, and not our dead, with, "I stood there a few moments wondering what their stories were, and whether their families would ever know what had happened to them."

For the sake of families on both sides, it would be a good thing if it we can find an answer to Barry Lyons' question...and peace for long grieving families.

Click the below Icons to read the Mass Graves remains stories:

<http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/society/176579/150-remains-of-soldiers-found-at-southern-airport%20html>



VIETNAM NET BRIDGE

April 13, 2017: 150 remains of soldiers found at southern airport. As many as 150 sets of remain believed to be Vietnamese soldiers that died [Tết, 31 January] in 1968 during the American War have been found at an airport [then, Biên Hòa Air Base, RVN] in the southern province of Đồng Nai.

<https://www.vietnambreakingnews.com/2017/04/tet-offensive-mass-grave-unearthed-at-vietnam-airport/>



April 14, 2017: Tết Offensive mass grave unearthed at Vietnam airport...