



## Top Dog at Bien Hoa Airbase, RVN

### Base Canine Handlers Return From Viet-Nam

A1C Frank A. Fielding, A1C Kenneth R. Hamby and A2C James M. Harvey assigned to the 825th Combat Defense Squadron have recently returned from a 120 day experimental temporary duty assignment to the Republic of South Viet-Nam where they tested the combat capabilities of K-9 dogs in war zones.

The code name for the project was Top Dog 45 and was commanded by Maj. William W. Cady, chief of veterinary services in the United States Air Force.

The first kennels were built at Ben Hoa AB, and was the beginning of one of the most expensive TDYs that the Air Force has embarked upon. After a four month trial period, the program was considered a success and the three airmen were replaced by 45 additional dog handlers on Oct. 21, with more than 70 additional handlers soon coming in. Air Force officials expect that the first of the year will see more than 1,000 handlers in Viet-Nam as a part of the ever increasing security forces which are being sent to that country.

During the time that the three airmen were stationed in Viet-Nam, constant shifting of operation was necessary in order to test the dogs under varied conditions. During the entire tour of duty no one security post

was ever guarded twice by the same dog handler. Those places that required security checks were: base perimeters, bomb dumps, an Army missile site and any place that a regular Air Policeman was not able to handle under normal conditions.

While on patrol the trio was subjected to constant sniper fire and were subjected to mortar fire on two occasions.

For their outstanding work while stationed in Viet-Nam, the three airmen have been awarded the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Viet-Nam Service Medal and have been recommended for the Air Force Commendation Medal.



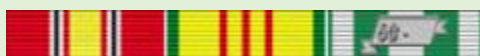
Airman Harvey and dog



(Article & Photo Courtesy of James Harvey)

“From the coming of the first sentry dog teams in July 1965 until 4 December 1966, no known penetrations took place in areas patrolled by dogs. But on the 4th of December, sappers aided by good weather and the terrain slipped through a sentry dog post at Tan Son Nhut. The infiltrators were spotted when they tried to penetrate a second (backup) post. The alarm voiced by the handler at the second post alerted the air base, triggering a defense force counterattack that staved off major damage and wiped out the enemy raiding party. During the fighting, sentry dog forces in South Vietnam sustained their first casualties: one handler and three sentry dogs killed, two handlers and one sentry dog wounded. In the ensuing years of the war, the sentry dogs saw no combat of this size. Nevertheless, they quietly showed their value as sturdy, versatile, detection devices”

Above from History of Air Base Defense of Vietnam 1961-1973  
[http://www.vspa.com/k9/downloads/Air\\_Base\\_Defense\\_RVN.pdf](http://www.vspa.com/k9/downloads/Air_Base_Defense_RVN.pdf)



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