

## **Air Base Defense**

*Both sides of the Wire*

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Tet 1968—At Air Bases across Vietnam the enemy fell on Security Police swords by the hundreds. Blood glistened by flare-lite on humming-barbwire, strummed by a boot-twang down the perimeter line. A snagged-scalp danced and bounced on the wire— dead-eyes dripped away its last-red—Blind eyes' last fading vision of red-star comrades falling, exploding... a macabre grin rolled up like a burrito on the ground.

'Flyboys... No victory in Base Defense,' Hanoi Hanna brayed over U.S. AFVN radio that night— 'Tell that to your dead', I said to no one living: 'The eagles still come and go as they please, rearm and wing away freely, unconcerned for their nestlings— nor the shallow mass grave nearby stuffed with NVA dead—*not ours*—filled with *your* comrades' meat-grinder-mess and hovering cloud of stench, repugnant even to flies.