

The Battles for Long Bình and Biên Hòa

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by John E. Gross, 1st LT (LTC, Ret.),

2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 47th Infantry (2-47), nicknamed the *Panthers*, 1967-1968.

(Excerpts courtesy of *Weapons and Warfare: Read complete article at:*

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0300, 31 January 1968

John E. Gross, 1st LT (LTC, Ret.)

2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 47th Infantry (2-47), nicknamed the *Panthers*, 1967-1968. At 0300 hours, I received a call from Major Bill Jones ... stating that Biên Hòa Air Base, the Long Bình facility, the II Field Force headquarters and the 199th Light Infantry Brigade (LIB) base camp were under heavy mortar and rocket attack. This was no surprise to us, since we could plainly hear the enemy rounds slamming into Long Bình.



Photographer unknown: Army Tank and M113, during VC/NVA attack on Bien Hoa, Tết, 31 Jan 1968.

[Click photo for close-up](#)

0500, 31 January 1968

There were three important bases 21km to the north-east of Saigon: ARVN III Corps headquarters in Biên Hòa; the United States Air Base [Biên Hòa Air Base] on the outskirts of Biên Hòa; and the huge ammunition dump at Long Bình.

Following General Westmoreland's cancellation of the ceasefire, 9th Division's 2/47th Infantry (Mechanized) had set up blocking positions around all three. By 5.00am on 31 January, all three bases reported that they were under attack by units of the 5th VC Division. Lieutenant Colonel John B. Tower deployed his three mechanized companies to relieve the garrisons in ... the Biên Hòa -- Long Binh area.

Company C fought its way past the 275th VC Regiment astride Highway 1 ... before stopping the 274th VC Regiment's attack on Biên Hòa Air Base. The Viet Cong had wanted to halt planes and helicopters taking off from the airfield [and from] providing fire support units around Saigon. The Viet Cong tried...to storm the bunkers [at Biên Hòa Air Base], aiming to turn their heavy machine-guns on the runways. Instead, helicopter gunships helped the troops on the ground clear the east end of the base by nightfall. The battle continued the following day, but the Viet Cong finally disengaged when 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment arrived at dusk.

1 February 1968, First Light

"At first light on 1 February 1st Infantry Division assembled reaction forces at its bases north of Saigon and were soon heading south along Route 1. The Big Red One was expecting trouble and, when Major General John H. Hay's infantry ran into 273rd VC Regiment's roadblocks, they surrounded Phu Loi while their artillery deployed. For once, the Viet Cong were not going to escape into the jungle and after the howitzers had fired 3,500 rounds at the village, the GIs moved in to mop up the survivors. *There were not many*; 273rd Regiment had been decimated, leaving the main road to Saigon open."



M60 PATTON TANK AND M113, DURING ENEMY ATTACK ON BIEN HOA, Tet 1968