

3RD Security Police Bien Hoa Airbase, RVN 1967-68

[by, LTC KENTON DOYLE
MILLER 3rd Security Police
Squadron Squadron
Commander
1967 - 1968]

[LTC Miller, 3rd SPS Squadron Commander, gave me a copy of his journal and photos. Photos were taken before, during, and after the Battle of Bien Hoa, at Bien Hoa Air Base, and some from Bunker Hill-10 itself. Jon Hayes, 3rd Security Police Squadron, 1967-1968.]

July 2002

This photo journal covers my tour at Bien Hoa, Republic of Viet Nam from Feb. 1967 to Feb. 1968. The Majority of the photos were provided by detachment #6, 600 Photo Squadron, myself or furnished by 3rd Security Police Squadron members.

The primary emphasis of the journal centers on the "TET Offensive" of January 31, 1968. Other photos and written material emphasis items I hope will be of interest.

The 3rd Security Police Squadron was part of the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW). The 3rd TFW flew F-100 aircraft in support of the overall mission of 7th Air Force in Vietnam.

Officially, the 3rd TFW was a "tenant" on the base which belonged to the Vietnamese National Air Force (VNAF). In effect the 3rd ran the base as all equipment of the VNAF and USAF was furnished by the USA.

Kent Miller

To my comrade in arms Jon Hayes:

The Bravery you displayed at Bunker Hill #10 during the Battle of "TET-1968" will always be Remembered by those of us who were there.

It was a privilege to have commanded such gallant fighting men as yourself and fellow squadron members of the Third Security Police Squadron.

Kent Miller
Lt. Col., USAF (RET)

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE)
APO San Francisco 96250

AVBE-SCJS

24 August 1967

SUBJECT: Letter of Instruction: Training for Brigade Replacements 23
August thru 2 September 1967.

TO: See Distribution

1. GENERAL. Brigade replacement training for the week of 28 August thru 2 September 1967 to prepare 173d Airborne Brigade replacements for combat operations in Vietnam. All personnel in grades E1 - E7, and O1 - O2 who have arrived in country since 1 March 1967 and have not completed Jungle School will attend. Personnel with a previous tour in Vietnam, who have a six month or more break between tours are required to attend. All NCO's and Officers who have not attend since this date will attend this weeks training.

2. TRAINING PROGRAM. The training program consists of six days of combat subjects taught by instructors with combat experience in Vietnam. Training includes four days of instruction conducted in the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry and 17th Cavalry areas, a one and one half-day field operation in the Brigade TAOR, and one half day of jump training at the Brigade Training Area.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. S-3 - Overall planning and staff coordination.
- b. S-4 - Provide logistical support, transportation and equipment as required.
- c. CO, 4/503d - Provide evening meal for students Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Provide ice tea, Kool Aid or Juice for noon meal Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

d. Unit Commanders:

(1) Issue prescribed organizational clothing, equipment, weapons and basic load of ammunition. Insure individual's equipment is serviceable and adjusted properly before reporting for training in prescribed uniform (See Incl 2) and carry pencil or pen and notebook. Weapons should be inspected, cleaned and properly lubricated before student reports for training.

AVBE-SCJS

24 August 1967

SUBJECT: Letter of Instruction: Training for the Brigade Replacements 28 August thru 2 September 1967.

(2) Provide Commandant, Jungle School, with a roster of student personnel, rank, MOS, and ASN MLT 1200 hours, Saturday 26 August 1967. The roster will include date of rank of E5's thru E7's and all Officers.

(3) Provide transportation for members of your unit and insure that they report to the prescribed place at the prescribed time. Insure transportation is at the prescribed pick-up place (Incl 2) and the person responsible for picking up the students has a roster and does not depart until all students he is responsible for have transportation to their units.

(4) Issue one (1) "C" ration meal to each student Monday, five (5) on Tuesday, and one (1) meal Wednesday and Saturday. Issue sufficient heat tablets to heat the "C" ration meals.

(5) Insure the replacement is not put on guard or extra duty and receives maximum rest during the training period. Medical appointments and in-processing should not be scheduled during the training period.

(6) Insure student's assigned weapons have a piece of tape on the stock showing name and unit. All weapons will have slings or ropes.

(7) Assign Senior NCO from each unit as NCOIC. He should have two (2) rosters of the students for duration of course.

(8) Rifle Battalions will issue three (3) M-79's or XM148A1's and one (1) PRC-25 radio to students for duration of course.

(9) Insure chow is saved for personnel attending Jungle School on Wednesday evening.

4. COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS:

a. A student may attend the course even if he has not been included in the roster submitted Saturday 26 August 1967. His name should be given to the school First Sergeant Monday. Personnel reporting to the Brigade on Monday may report for training Tuesday morning. They must attend training the next Monday to receive credit for the course.

b. Disciplinary violations will be reported in writing to unit Commander concerned. Units desiring to know the final score of their men should contact the School First Sergeant. Diplomas for personnel who have satisfactorily completed the course will be forwarded to the unit approximately twelve (12) days after graduation.

2

c. Students will mess with their units for breakfast Monday through Thursday, and for evening meal Wednesday. All students will be returned to their units prior to evening meal Friday and Saturday.

AVBE-SCJS

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August thru 2 September.

d. Units will give PT to new replacements prior to reporting to the Jungle School.

e. Units are requested to observe class times and equipment requirements contained in the attached training schedules. (Incl 2)

f. Units are requested to inspect students daily for personnel appearance and correct uniform and equipment prior to students reporting to the school.

g. School Cadre will inspect students daily for personnel appearance and correct uniform and equipment. Deficiencies will be subtracted from the student's total course grade.

h. Students going on sick call or appointments from their units should notify the NCOIC first. When reporting back to the school from sick call or appointments, students will report to the School First Sergeant.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



W. L. KVASNICKA
1LT, AGC
Asst AG

2 Incl

1. Training Schedule
2. Reporting Time & Equipment

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FROM: Captain Verna

31 August 1967

SUBJECT: EAGLE PLATOONS

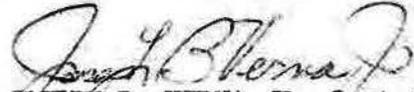
TO: All Military Fighting Men of the 3rd Security Police Squadron

1. **PURPOSE:** To provide Bien Hoa Air Base a reaction force to be deployed behind the enemy for harassment and interdiction following a mortar attack.
2. **Concept of Operation:** The 57th & 58th Regional Forces will share alert standby duty on a rotating basis with the 3rd Security Police Squadron. A flight of 45 men will be stationed at the 145th Aviation Battalion each night from 2200 hours until 0400 hours. In the event a mortar attack occurs and firing positions are identified, this force will be deployed to preselected landing zones behind the enemy position to engage or harass them during their retreat.
3. **Training:** The 173rd Airborne Brigade Jungle School will provide training on tactics and maneuvers. The start date is tentatively scheduled for 11 Sept 67. It will be conducted on your off duty time. It will take three to four hours a day for five days. Attachment 1 is the full training schedule for the jungle school. We will receive selected subjects for our "Eagle Platoons".
4. **Manpower Requirements and Selection:** To perform this duty and to minimize the commitment, I am requesting 45 men from "A" Flt and 45 men from "B" Flt to join this program. With two groups of 45, each group will stand alert one night out of every six nights.
 - a. Because of the training provided, personnel with retainability are desired. This should not prevent "Short Timers" from signing up. With the number of personnel required, "Short Timers" will be required to get us over the large loss this squadron will sustain between 1 Oct and 31 Dec 67.
5. **Program Start Date:** We are hopeful that this program will be operational before 1 Oct 67. A great amount of training, procurment, coordination and planning is still ahead of us.
6. **Deadline:** All volunteers should have their names affixed to the roster NLT 1600 hours, 1 Sept 67.
7. **General:** I have been extremely proud and honored to be associated with this squadron to date. Your daily performance has been outstanding and your support of squadron policy and mission has been the finest I have

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witnessed in my career. Your cooperation and backing are necessary to make this program an effective and practical weapon against the Viet Cong. It will require personal sacrifice from each man in the form of reduced free time and comfort and exposure to a hostile environment. I am convinced, however, after three months in this squadron, you are prepared to make this sacrifice.


JOSEPH B. VERNA JR, Captain, USAF
Security Operations Officer

1 Atch
173rd Ltr; Subj; Training for
Brigade Replacements.

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17 February 1968

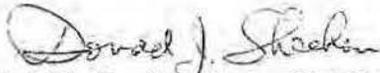
Lt. Col. K. D. Miller
Commander, 3rd Security Police Squadron

Dear Colonel Miller,

Enclosed are a couple of copies of the fruit of my snooping around and bothering a few of your people. It's not great literature, but I thought maybe you'd like to send a copy to Capt. Maisey's folks. Use your own judgment. I might stop by the Information office, and ask them what they think - if they'd think it could maybe be sent to AIRMEN or some other AF publication. Otherwise, it will probably only see the light of day in a local Catholic diocesan paper at home - if that!

Thanks for your cooperation and time. The respect and esteem expressed in the article is genuine.

Sincerely,



Donald J. Sheehan, Chaplain, Captain, USAF
Catholic Chaplain

TET Offensive

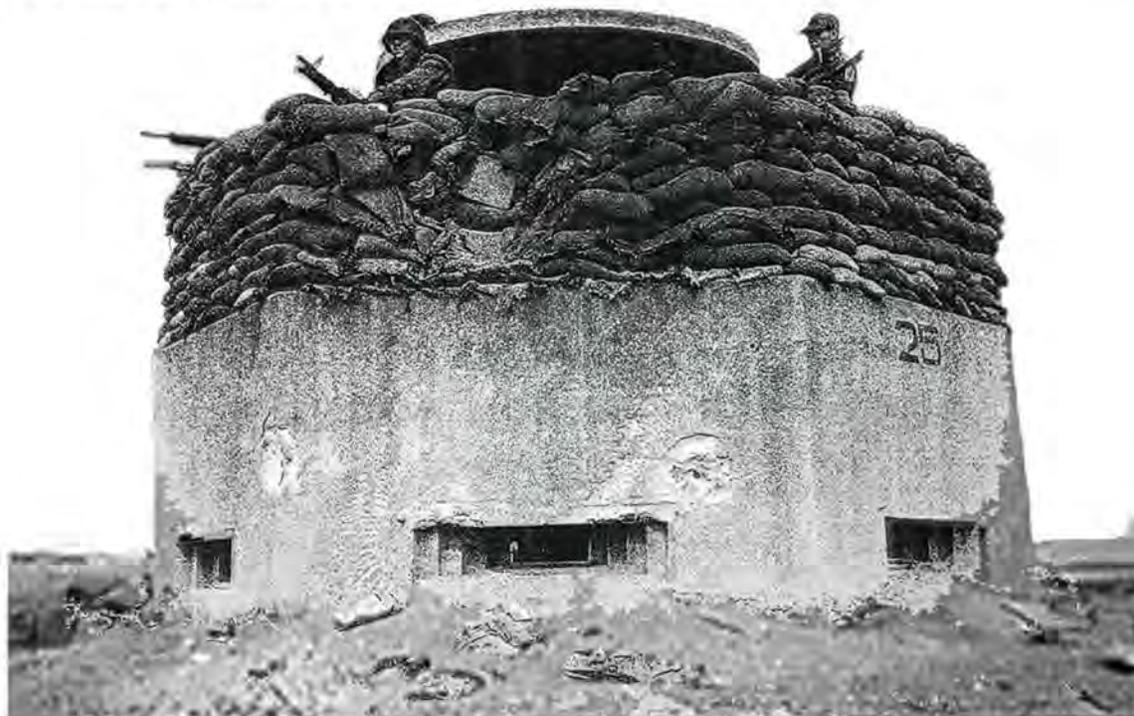
3rd Security Police Squadron BIEN HOA AIR BASE 31 January 1968

During the day of January 30, 1968 the squadron was placed on Red Alert, the highest of all alerts. We went from three flights to two with the flight off-duty on standby alert status. The three day truce that was to take place during the TET holiday had been cancelled, but that order never reached our squadron. Many of us were not overly impressed with the alert as past intelligence had misled us numerous times. This was our first "Red" alert and we implemented our complete red alert plan.

In addition to our normal K-9 patrols on the perimeter we had two man listening posts, extra Sabotage Alert Teams (SAT) manned with an additional security policeman, extra SP's in the bunkers, Quick Reaction Forces (QRF) in place at strategic areas that could be rushed to a breach in the fenceline and two vehicles loaded with extra ammunition. All of the men were riding in those fighting Air Force vehicles; jeeps, pickup trucks and stake trucks as we were not issued armored vehicles.

The official word from 7th A.F. was that we would never be attacked by an enemy force larger than platoon size. Our attacking force consisted of two Battalions and a reinforced company (about 20 platoons).

On the morning of January 31st a mortar and rocket attack rained down on the base. We had been so attacked numerous times before but they were of short duration, primarily for harassment, and were of short duration. This attack went on and on. The squadron commander radioed from the alternate Central Security Control (CSC), as the primary CSC had been temporarily knocked out with a mortar or rocket, for all to take cover but to keep their eyes open as the intensity of the attack indicated it was cover for a ground attack. In a few minutes a K-9 handler radioed that his dog had a "Big" alert. He was directed to "pop" a flare and when the flare illuminated he said, "They are everywhere", and the east perimeter received enemy small arms fire from many places. The battle for control of Bien Hoa Airbase was on.



Bunker Hill 10: This old french stone bunker was one of the four areas initially penetrated during the ground attack. Approximately 30 to 40 Security Policeman fought from in and around the bunker. At one time the enemy had the bunker surrounded but the defenders were never overrun. Notice the rocket propelled grenade hits on the bunker. Three hours prior to this photo being taken the walls of the bunker were as smooth as the rear end of a new born baby.

UNCOMMONLY BRAVE

Around 9 p.m. on January 17th, Capt. Reginald V. Maisey of our 3rd Security Police Squadron here at Bien Hoa Air Base, stopped by the chapel in his jeep and picked me up. Earlier in the day I had asked if I might accompany him that night on his inspection round of the perimeter guard. "Love to have you, Father" he said. "The men are a bit jumpy. They'll appreciate seeing a chaplain." While accompanying Capt. Maisey on his security inspection trip that night, I noted that the men were much more reassured by seeing Capt. Maisey than by seeing an unarmed chaplain. I know why now.

That night I spent about four hours with Capt. Maisey, being briefed at the Command Post, driving around the perimeter of the base, and visiting all the posts. His presence visibly reassured the men we visited in their isolated locations. At one stop, he climbed the ladder to visit a guard in his lonely watch on a metal roost some thirty feet above the ground. At other stops, he checked the security of a bunker or the placement of a machine-gun. Along the road, he halted the jeep frequently to chat with a K-9 sentry. You could see that Capt. Maisey troubled himself for his men. He was a professional.

At three a.m. on the 31st of January, the Communists launched their 'Tet Offensive' against Bien Hoa Air Base. It commenced with a ten minute rocket bombardment that sent men scurrying for protective shelter. The bombardment was followed by enemy sapper teams breaching the perimeter of the Air Base on the east end.

The next time I saw Capt. Maisey, I did not recognize him. I can't recall just what time it was during the eventful morning hours of the 31st of January that I conditionally absolved and administered the Last Rites to an officer who was dead on arrival at the dispensary. I do remember someone at one time informing me that Capt. Maisey had been killed at Bunker Hill 10. Later in the day, I unzipped the heavy canvas bag containing Capt. Maisey's remains. I recognized him as the man I had anointed earlier that morning. The story of Capt. Maisey and Bunker Hill 10 is one worth remembering.

Bunker Hill 10 is a reinforced concrete structure, built many years ago by the French. It is situated on the edge of the east perimeter road, a few hundred yards beyond the end of our runway. Immediately after the rocket attack the morning of the 31st, a large number of well-armed, pajama-clad Communist troops penetrated the fence northwest of Bunker Hill 10. They spilled out into the fields to the left and front of the old French bunker. The enemy subjected Bunker Hill 10 to the most intense fire power imaginable, using their automatic weapons, as well as the devastating and destructive RPG-2 and RPG-7 rockets. At the outset of the battle, Bunker Hill 10 was manned by two Security Policemen, Sgts. Neal Tuggle and Marshall Gott, and an augmentee, ALC Neil Behnke.

When the enemy attack started, Capt. Maisey was at the western end of the base. He immediately sped in his jeep to the Central Security Command Post. Realizing how critical holding Bunker Hill 10 was, Capt. Maisey volunteered to go there to direct the defense of that area. Shortly thereafter, he arrived at the bunker and took charge of the small band of men from the 3rd Security Police Squadron in the vicinity of Bunker Hill 10. The Communists attacked the bunker with a vengeance. They knew it was the key to overrunning the east end of the field,

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and gaining access to the planes on the flight line, the maintenance hangers, and other vital areas of the air base. The enemy hit Bunker Hill 10 with everything they had. About twelve direct rocket hits at point-blank range were recorded by the enemy. On top of the bunker, one rocket put Sgt. Tuggle's machine-gun out of action. Sgt. Tuggle went below, grabbed another weapon, and continued to fight from within the bunker. The augmentee, A1C Behnke, remained on top of the bunker, and continued to fire his M-16 at the enemy enveloping the bunker.

Capt. Maisey seemed to be everywhere. To direct and concentrate the fire power of the twenty or so Security Policemen in the general area on the enemy that was within 200 feet of the bunker, he constantly exposed himself to danger. To communicate by radio with the Security Command Post, Capt. Maisey had to leave the relative security of the bunker and expose himself to enemy fire. He did this throughout the battle. Above the noise of the battle, he yelled orders and directions to the men around him. His voice instilled confidence and bolstered the morale of the beleaguered defenders of the bunker.

At a time when bravery was common, Capt. Maisey's bravery under fire was uncommon and contagious. Though the small band of men did not know it, their position at times was surrounded by VC. Capt. Maisey and the other men continued firing. They kept the enemy pinned down not too far from their original point of penetration. No one knows how many enemy were killed by the men defending Bunker Hill 10. After the battle, over sixty dead VC were found nearby.

The bravery of the men in Bunker Hill 10 was matched by the incredible valor of other men of the 3rd Security Police Squadron. Sgts. William Piazza and James Loe did the impossible. Through a withering field of enemy fire, they drove a truck back to the base armory, loaded it with needed ammunition, and returned to their exposed position on the north perimeter road. From there, they proceeded to drive south across what would seem an impassable field - a field alive with VC. The men dauntlessly drove right up to the besieged Bunker Hill 10, and under constant enemy fire resupplied the defenders of the bunker with enough ammunition to enable them to continue the fight. When one knows the terrain these men passed through, and remembers the confusion at the time, and the danger of their cargo, he stands in awe at their courageous feat. It seems impossible. But brave men made the impossible possible.

The bravest of the brave was Capt. Maisey. He fearlessly fought himself, and rallied, encouraged, and directed his men in the area. At one point, while outside the bunker relaying information to the Security Command Post by radio, he suddenly called out - "I'm hit" - and after a pause, he continued talking to the Security Command Post, apprising them of the battle situation.

At 4:30 a.m. that morning of the 31st of January, while Capt. Maisey was outside the bunker, a direct rocket hit ended his life. He fell on the field of battle. But his men fought on. They never gave up. When the battle ended around noon, the men of the 3rd Security Police Squadron still held Bunker Hill 10. The enemy never overran this pivotal point of the base's defense.

3.

Some men have asked whether an Air Force installation has ever before been exposed to such a sustained and severe ground attack. That question is best left for Air Force historians to answer. Unquestionably, it was a brutal, savage fight. Because of the valor and courage of a few uncommonly brave men, the fight never progressed beyond a few hundred yards of Bunker Hill 10. The 3rd Security Police Squadron suffered only two men killed in action, and 14 wounded.

What would have happened if Bunker Hill 10 had fallen? Would the enemy have gained control of a part of the base, or penetrated the eastern cantonment area? I don't know. I don't think anyone really knows. Thanks to the bravery and courage of men like Capt. Maisey, we shall never know the answer to that hypothetical question.

The courage under hostile fire of the men of the 3rd Security Police Squadron at Bien Hoa Air Base, under command of Lt. Col K. D. Miller - and especially the valor of the men at Bunker Hill 10, is known to only a few. I doubt whether future military history texts will devote many pages to this episode. It will never have the dramatic impact of the American assault on Heartbreak Ridge during the Korean War. But the battle of the 31st of January will be long remembered by those of us who were at Bien Hoa that fateful morning.

Was Capt. Maisey a particularly religious man? I don't know. "Greater love than this no man has, that one lay down his life for his friends. (Jn. 15,13) If CHrist measures all by charity, then Capt. Maisey was too big a man to stand measuring. I wear my Air Force uniform just a little more proudly these days because of men like Capt. Maisey.

Ch, Capt, Donald J. Sheehan
Bien Hoa Air Base



On the left Capt. Reggie Maisey, Sqdn. Operations officer and on the right Lt. Col. Kent Miller Sqdn. Commander. Capt. Maisey was killed while directing the defense of Bunker Hill #10. He was hit by a Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG). Capt. Maisey was an outstanding officer, respected and well liked by his fellow officers, NCO's and airmen. He came from a military family. His father as a security police warrant officer. He was awarded his nations second highest medal, The Air Force Cross, and a building at Andrews AFB in the nations capital bears his name.

Capt. Reginald Doyle Maisey
Air Force Cross
Battle of Bien Hoa, Bunker Hill-10
TET, 31 January 1968



DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

1. Buildings 46, 47, and 59 partially destroyed.
2. bunker in vicinity destroyed (Navy Area)
3. Trailer 170 (Col Coffee's) demolished and shrapnel in surrounding nootches.
4. 3 VNAF supply buildings completely destroyed. (located south of Navy Area)
5. Secondary power lines down in Navy Area and dispensary. EM area in process of being repaired.
6. 5000 ft of runway lights out for 15 minutes. (repaired immediately)
7. Control tower roof torn off. (repairs being made now)
8. Direct hit on north wall of VNAF building 2131N, adjacent to bldg 565.
9. VNAF building 2124 destroyed.
10. 6 mortar craters up and down ^{center} ramp.
11. Plane (A-37) completely destroyed and one large DIA. 3 ft. crater remains on center Apron.
12. F-100 and truck burned up on east side of building 1034.
13. Primary electric line down adjacent to building 521 on center ramp.
14. The following buildings are presently being restored electric power: 595, 596, 598, 1500, 3116, 3159, 1934, 164, 148, 159, 149, and 151.
15. Punctures in FOI bladders. (4)
16. Direct hit crater in H-8 road in front of building 1313.
17. Shrapnel damage confirmed in barracks 3181.
18. Building 1500 (504th) 30% destroyed.
19. Shrapnel damage to latrine adjacent to building 1800.
20. Damage to east area power plant as follows:
 - a. 1 radiator out of service from mortar.
 - b. 2 radiators slightly damaged.
 - c. 1 radiator with moderate damage. *2 must be repaired off base*
21. Water tower at Dining Hall #2 damaged.
22. Walls and roof damaged at building 507.
23. Data Automation Trailer, located on west end of bldg 1802 received minor exterior damage. Needs one day to repair.
24. Bldg 1802, Supply Warehouse, received minor structural damage to metal siding. Approximately two days to repair.
25. Bldg 3181, (barracks), received shrapnel damage on structure estimated to take 6 days to repair. Int light damage to electrical and plumbing fixtures.

FUEL TRUCK

F100

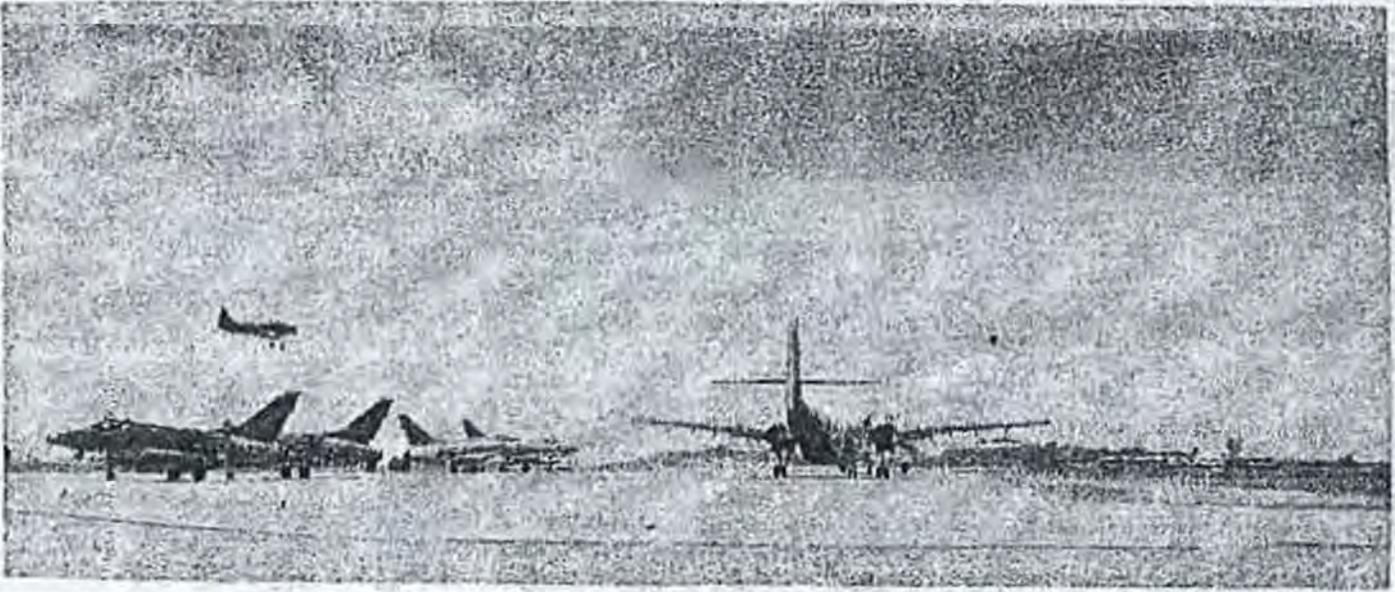
F-35

Damage

3 min. damage

DAMAGE ASSESSMENT CONT

26. Crew quarters under construction by Red Horse in east area received major structural damage to two buildings. Repair work will take 6 weeks total (3 weeks per building). Supporting electrical damage included replacing 3 transformers and one concrete pole.
27. Bldg 3165 (barracks) received minor roof damage from a nearby mortar round.
28. New chapel annex under construction in east area received minor structural damage. Repairs will take approximately 3 days to repair.
29. Finance building in east area received minor window and door breakage. Repairs will take approximately 3 days.
30. Bldg 2800, east area Mess Hall, requires minor structural repairs to metal walls. Total repairs will take one half day. May require some electrical repairs.
31. Latrine in rear of building 1800 received moderate structural, electrical and plumbing damage. Need 3 days to remove debris and 6 days to repair electrical damage and replace plumbing fixtures and pipes.
32. Road repairing is required approximately 400 feet west of east area Power Plant (bldg 3205). Mortar round landed in one lane going east.
33. Engine Test Cell. Generators destroyed 15 KVA. 5 Armo Section; Revetment destroyed (damaged). Repair bullet holes, Hut 999.
34. Armat Dearn facility destroyed.



The Typical Busy Flightline

During 1967-1968 Bien Hoa was the busiest airport in the world. Depending on which book you read an aircraft took-off or landed from every 30 seconds to every three minutes twenty-four hours a day.

The 3rd TFW flew F-100's, the VNAF had a wing of prop fighter bombers and the only VNAF jet squadron. Commercial U.S. airlines were constantly bringing new personnel in-country and flying "Freedom Birds" back to the States.

Air America, (CIA) special forces aircraft, C-47 Ginships, Flareships and aircraft equipment with loud speakers, "Bird Dogs"(spotter aircraft), U-2's, Interceptors, and some I had never seen before were landing or taking off. Also a Battalion of Army helicopters and a squadron of "Ranch hands" (defoliate with agent orange) called Bien Hoa home.



THIRD TACTICAL FIGHTER WING
F-100's IN THEIR REVEMENTS.

At Bien Hoa... There Were Hits All Over

BIEN HOA, Vietnam (AP) — Except for men on guard duty, air crews on alert and maintenance men readying the U.S. fighter-bombers for more raids, most of the officers and airmen at the sprawling Bien Hoa air base were asleep at 1 a.m. Friday.

Two airmen drove up to the big maintenance hangar, parked their jeep and got out. Suddenly they were dead.

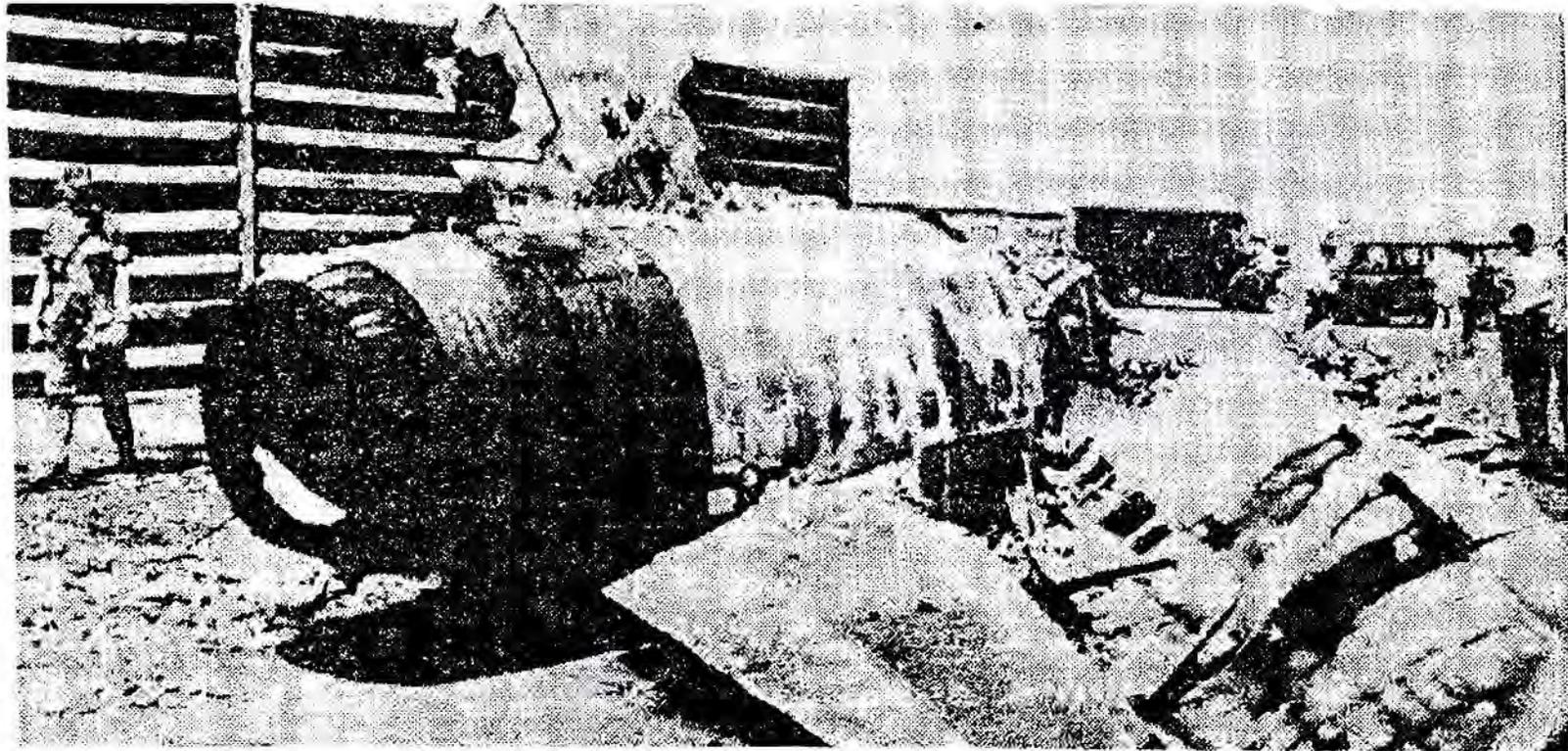
"These two guys never knew what hit them," said another airman.

Several thousand yards away a mechanic was sitting on the wing of a sleek \$1-million F100 Super Sabre jet, working under floodlights. There was a tremendous thud at the top of the concrete revetment. Shell fragments tore into the plane, setting it afire and struck the mechanic's leg. The mechanic quickly took cover in a bunker, leaving a trail of blood.

As the alert went out that Bien Hoa was under Communist rocket and mortar attack, 28 air policemen were asleep in a billet in the cantonment area. Just after most of them ran out of the building, a rocket tore through the roof, setting the building afire. Six men were wounded. Later, another man was found dead 100 feet away. The billet was a smoldering ruin.

Capt. Gary Tomkins, 29, of Culver City, Calif., was on alert duty. About 30 minutes after the attack, his flight of F100 Super Sabre jets had scrambled into the air in search of the enemy.

An F100, 100 yards away was destroyed. Several others were hit. But they were not the alert crew took cover



AP Radiophoto

BURNED-OUT F100 LIES IN REVETMENT AFTER ATTACK ON BIEN HOA AIR BASE BY VIET CONG.

er in bunkers during the 15-minute attack, fighter-bombers from another base raced into the area in an attempt to knock out the Red rockets and mortars.

Tomkins said that from his bunker he could see Communist machine-gun fire coming from north of the base, apparently aimed at the fighter-bombers already in the air and at two armed C-47 Dragon Ships orbiting the area.

Tomkins said the Super Sabre jets put five Communist 50-caliber machine guns out of action.

The casualties included six Americans killed and 31 wounded from the 125 rounds of rockets and mortar shells and the recoilless rifle fire the guerrillas rained on the base. Forty-two other Americans were injured while scrambling for cover. Most of them suffered sprained ankles or bruises.

"There were hits all over the base," said Maj. Jack H. Seim, 48, of Seattle, Wash., the base operations officer who took charge during the attack.

"There was no direct pattern. The name of the game is shoot and scam.

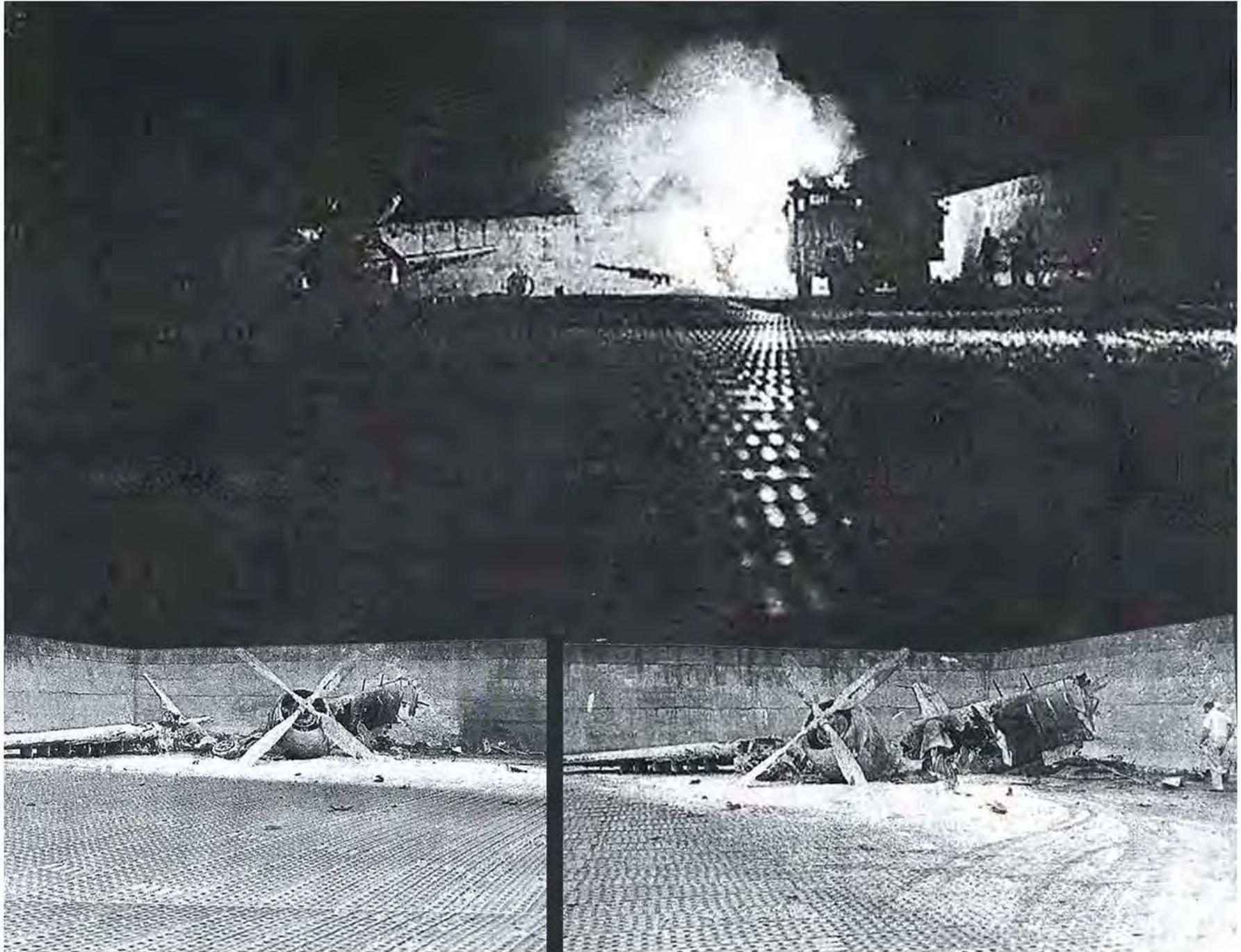
A U.S. F100 Super Sabre and a light, single-engine observation plane were destroyed. About 25 other American F100s and F102 all-weather interceptor jets were damaged, some of them badly and others with only small cuts that could be quickly repaired.

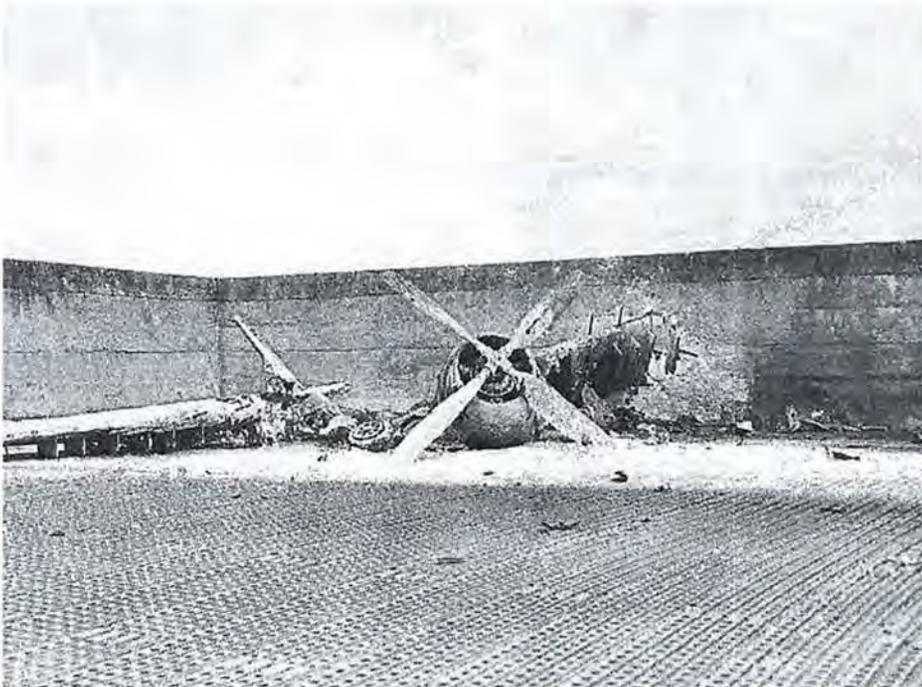
The South Vietnamese Air Force lost a propeller-driven A1 Skyraider and other South Vietnamese planes were damaged, including several new F5 Freedom Fighter jets.

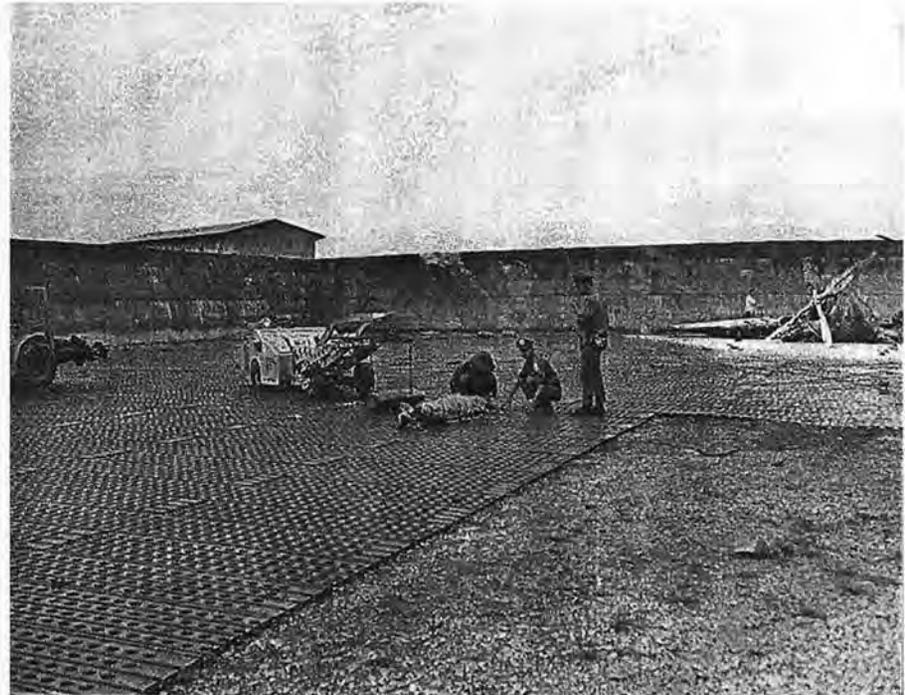
(While Bien Hoa was digging out, some 30 to 40 rounds from

82mm mortars hit the Phuoc Vinh airstrip 34 miles north of Saigon, the Pacific Stars and Stripes Vietnam Bureau reported.

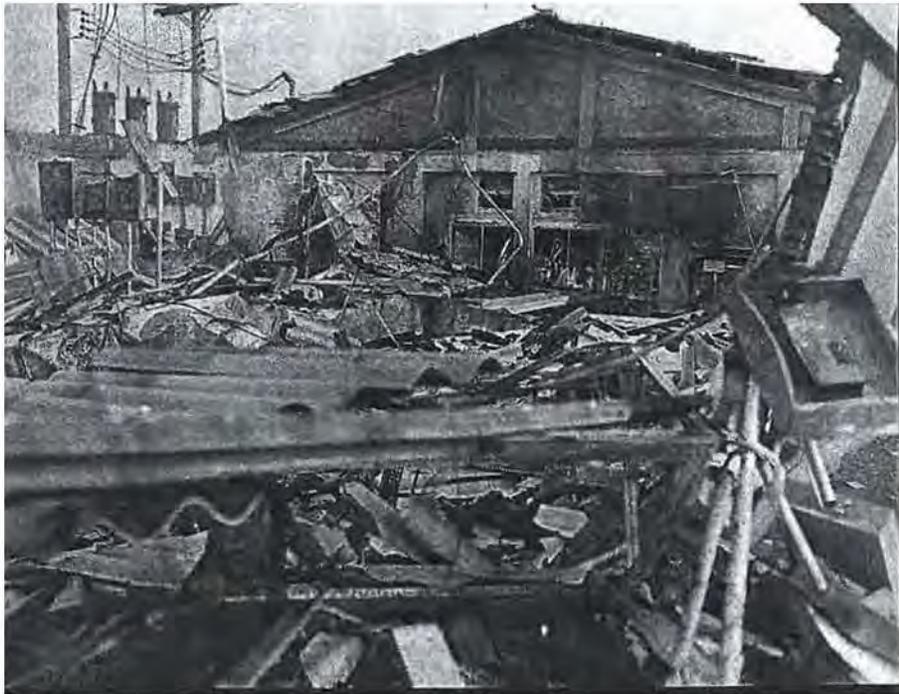
(Though 27 U.S. soldiers were wounded, most injuries were slight. Only four required evacuation, spokesmen said. U.S. forces fired back with their own mortars and armed helicopters guided by FAC controllers fanned out to blast the VC positions. The VC mortars were silenced within 20 minutes, but pilots were ~~downed~~ there were VC casualties.





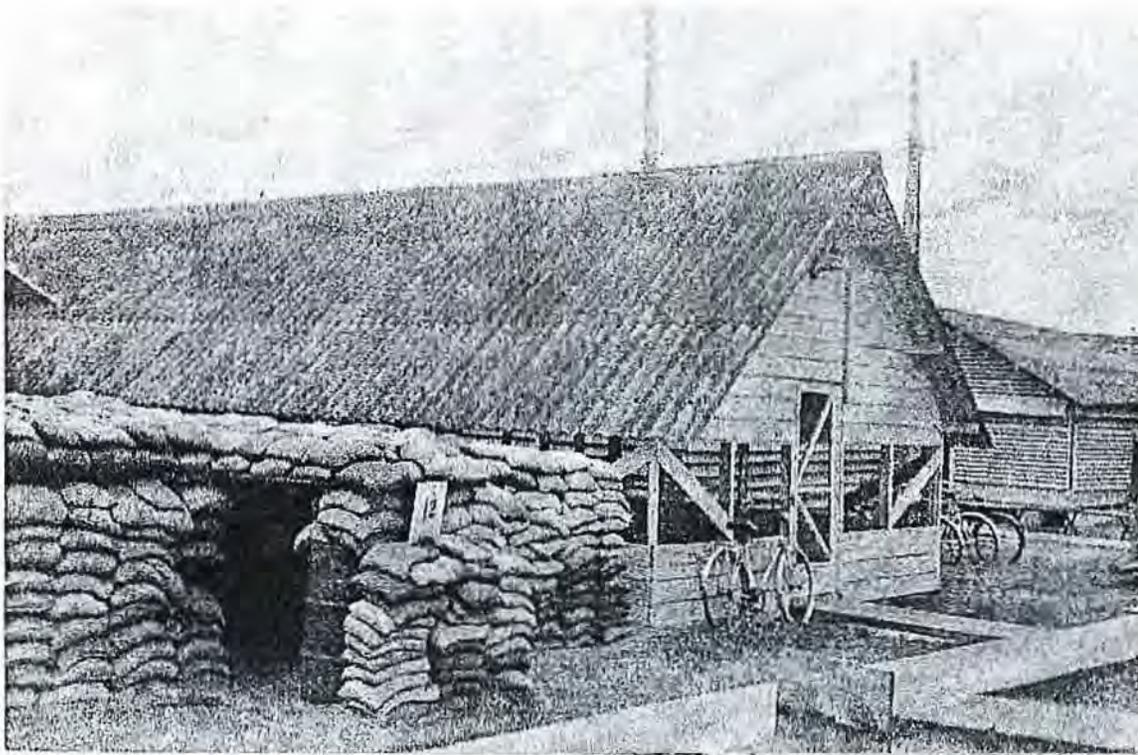


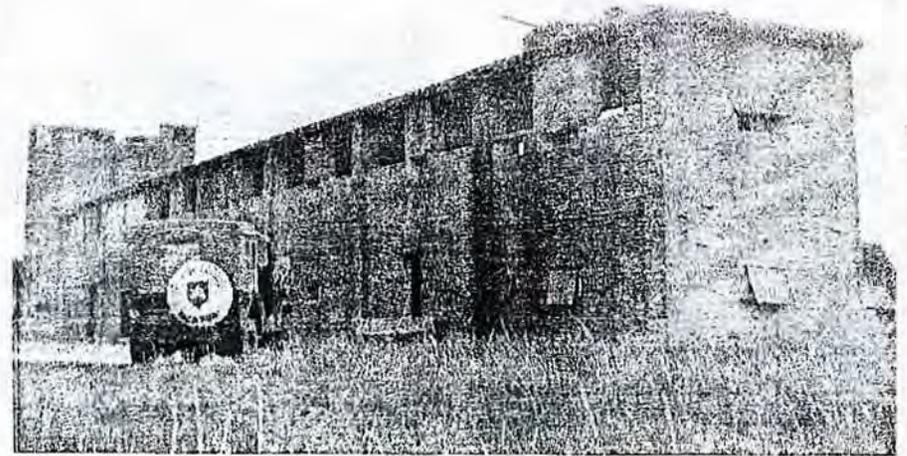
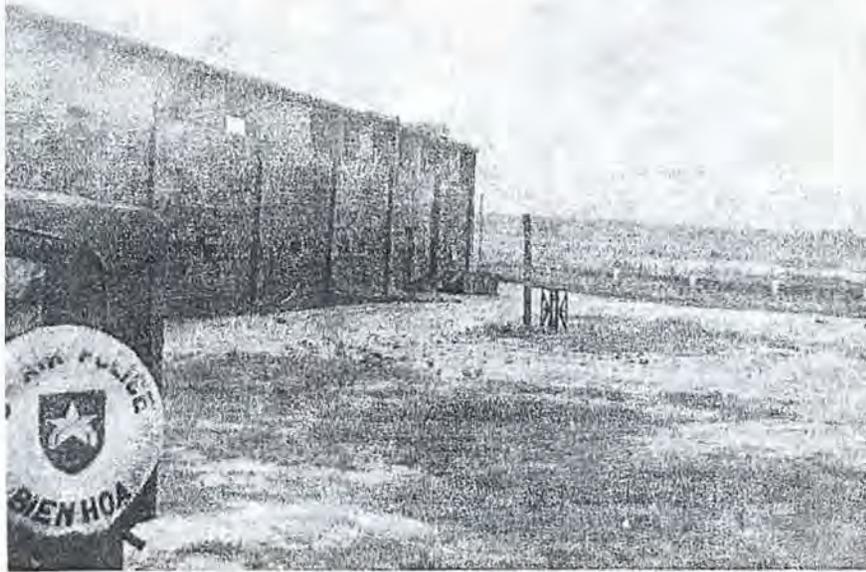




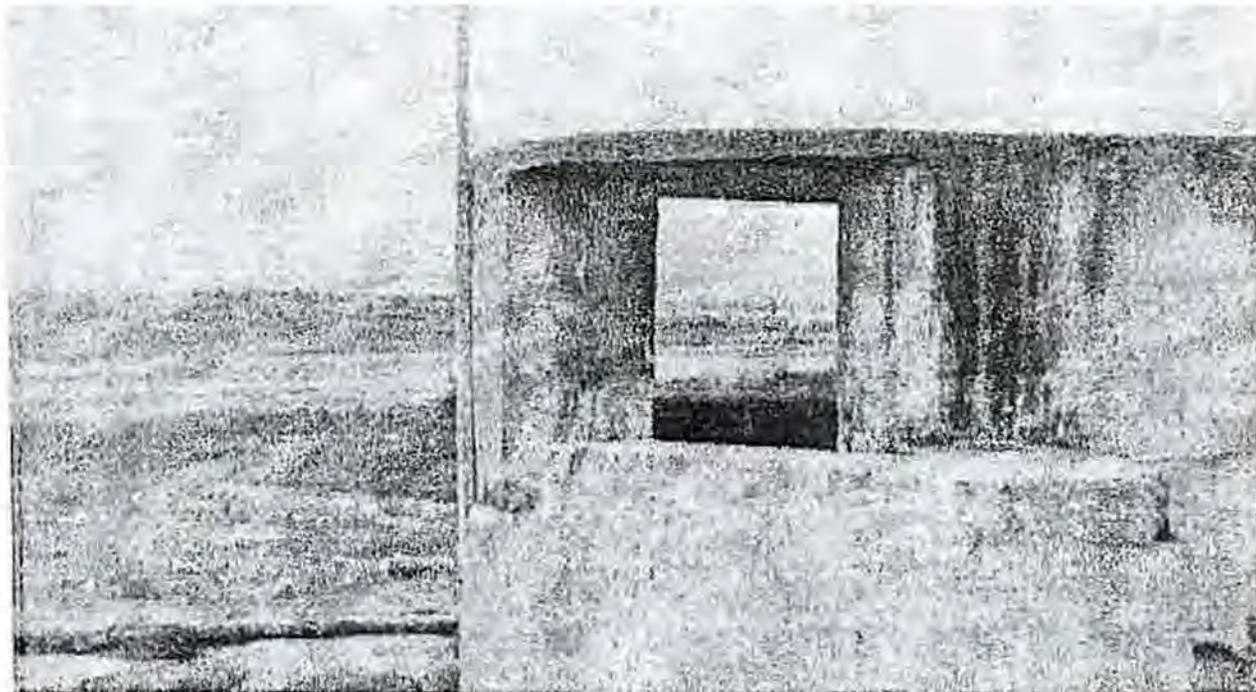
Bunkers

Top Left and Top Right: Personnel Bunkers for the base troops to take shelter during mortar and rocket attacks. The Bunkers are in place next to the "Hootches" all personnel lived in.
Bottom: Fighting Bunker built by the Security Policemen and manned by machine gunners and riflemen.

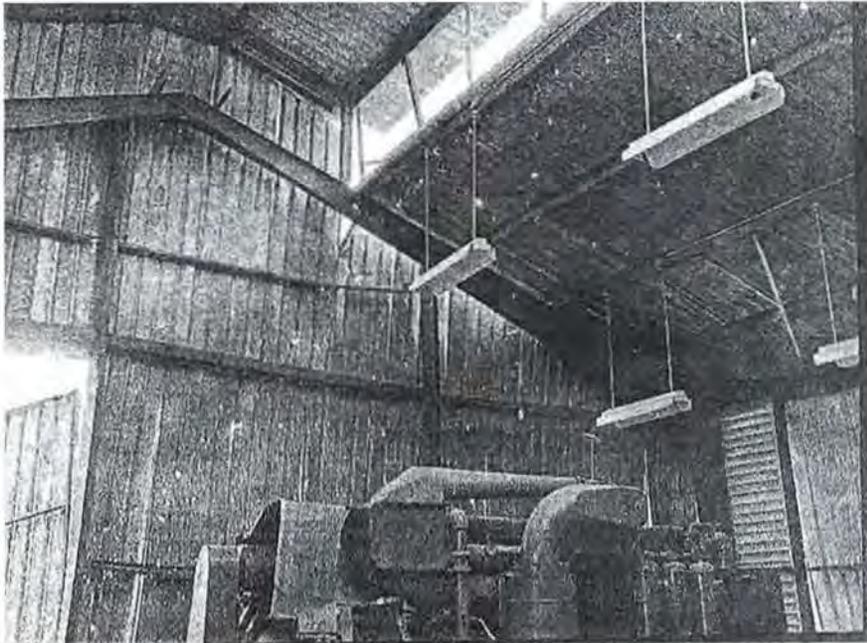


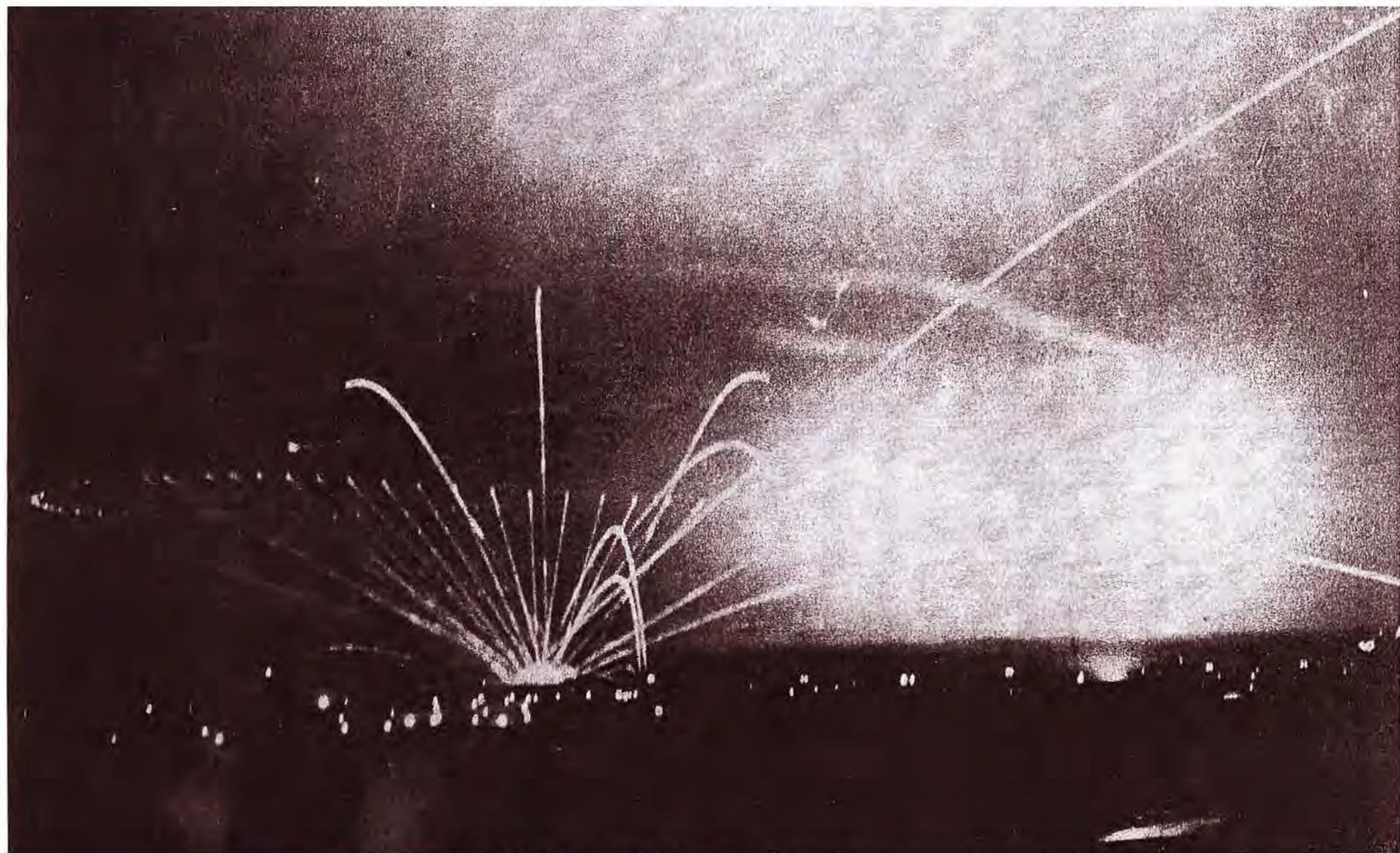


Old French fort located on the north end of the base.









Gunships from the 145th Helicopter Battalion providing support to the 3rd SPS fighting the ground battle. The army helicopters were stationed on Bien Hoa and without their assistance the airmen of the 3rd would have been hard pressed to defeat the enemy.

Arming Dearing Shack

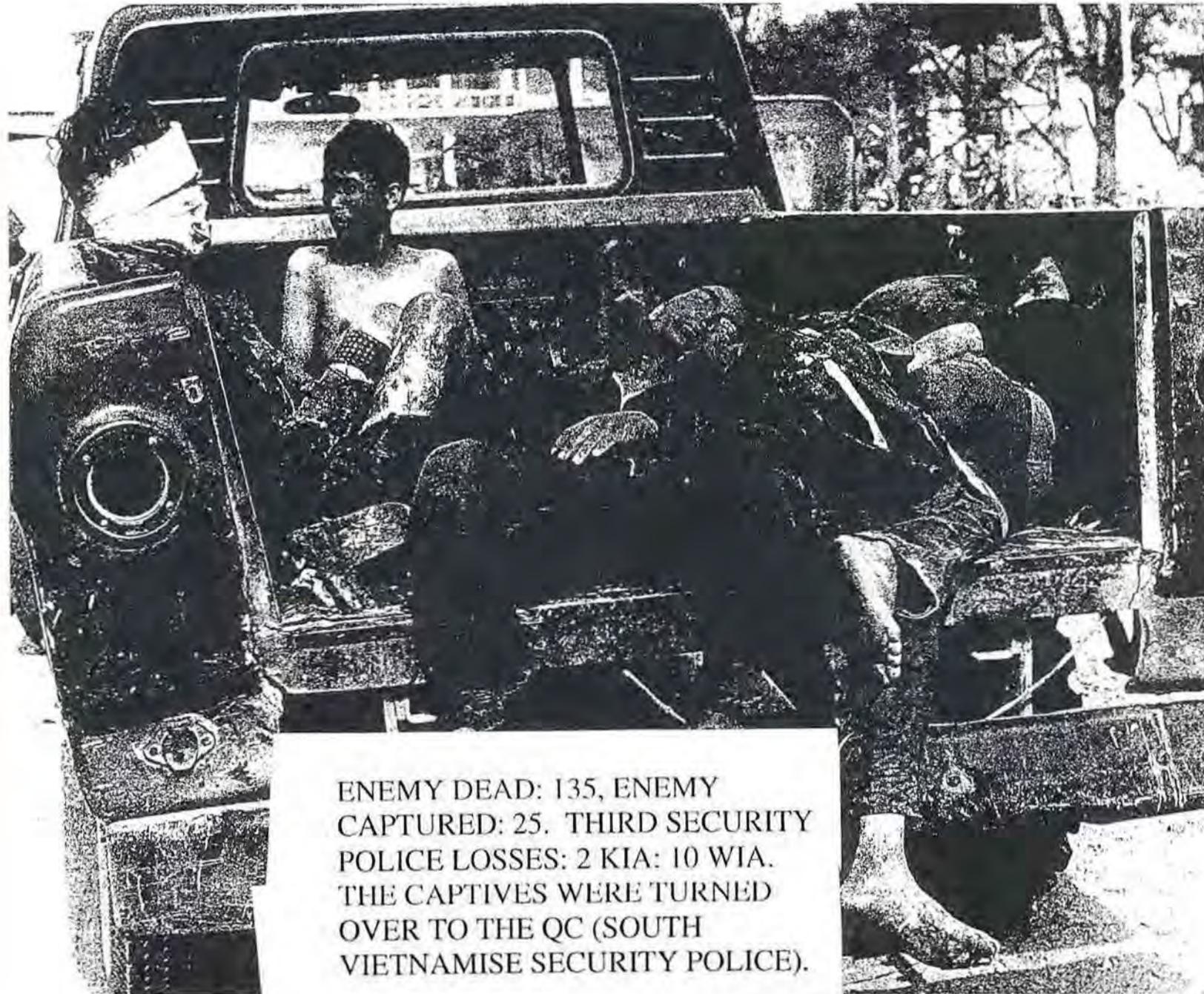
To this building and the A/C engine build-up area was the deepest penetration of the invaders. Our small arms fire could not dislodge them and we requested the Q.C. (South VN Security Police) to send a Recoilless Rifle Team to the area. The QC arrived and over a bullhorn asked the enemy to surrender; they refused and after several rounds from the recoilless rifle were fired into the building the enemy retracted. Our midnight Flight Commander, Capt. Marty Strone, formed a skirmish line of Security Policemen and drove the enemy back outside the fence line. Very few prisoners were taken.

On the right hand side of the photo is a bunker for the airmen on duty to take shelter in during rocket attacks. The airmen remained in the bunker throughout the battle and emerged unscathed.

These two airmen like all base personnel except for security policemen and air crew were not issued weapons.

Needless to say the thousands of base airmen treated the security policemen as heroes after the battle was over.





ENEMY DEAD: 135, ENEMY
CAPTURED: 25. THIRD SECURITY
POLICE LOSSES: 2 KIA: 10 WIA.
THE CAPTIVES WERE TURNED
OVER TO THE QC (SOUTH
VIETNAMISE SECURITY POLICE).



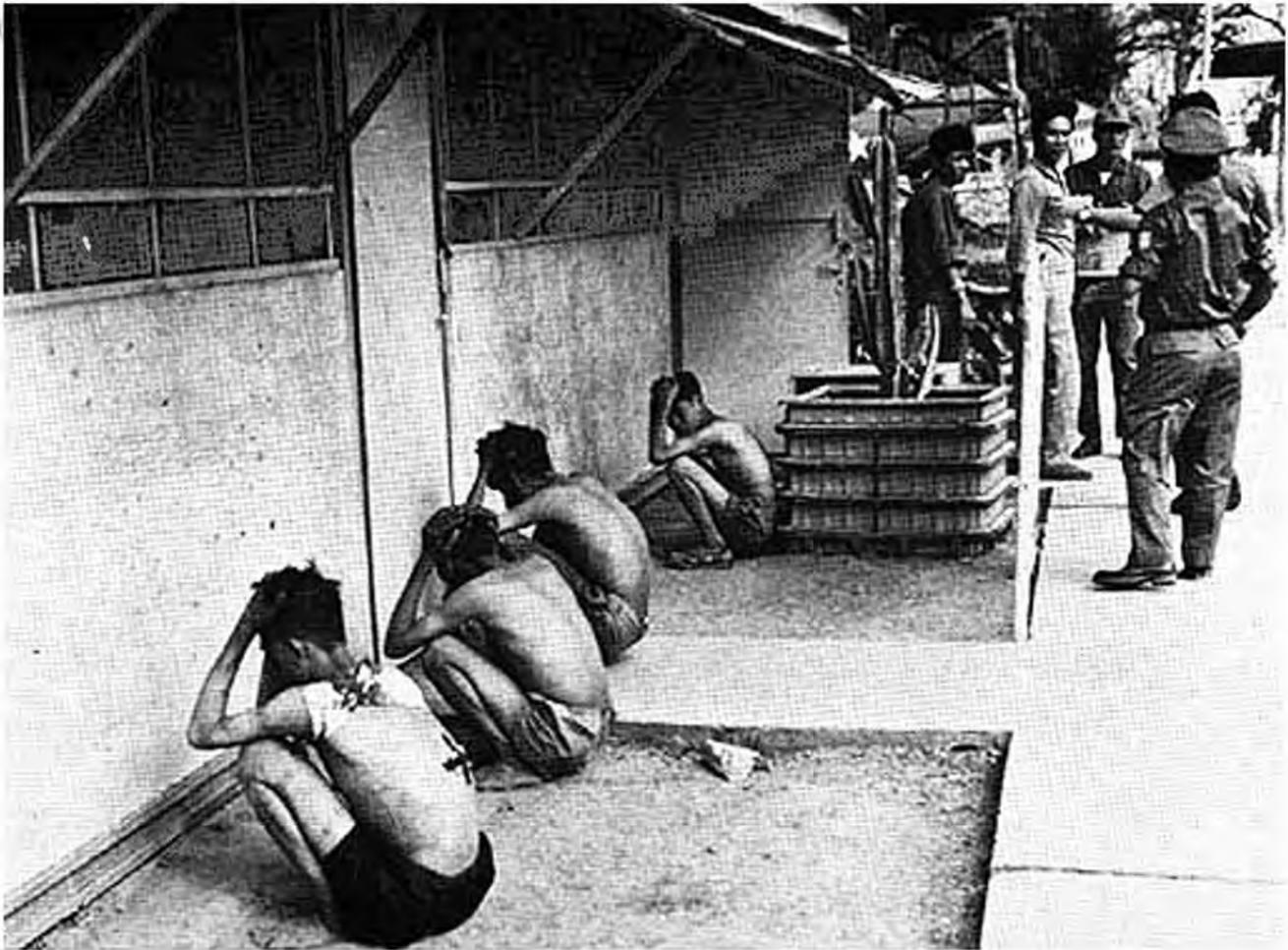










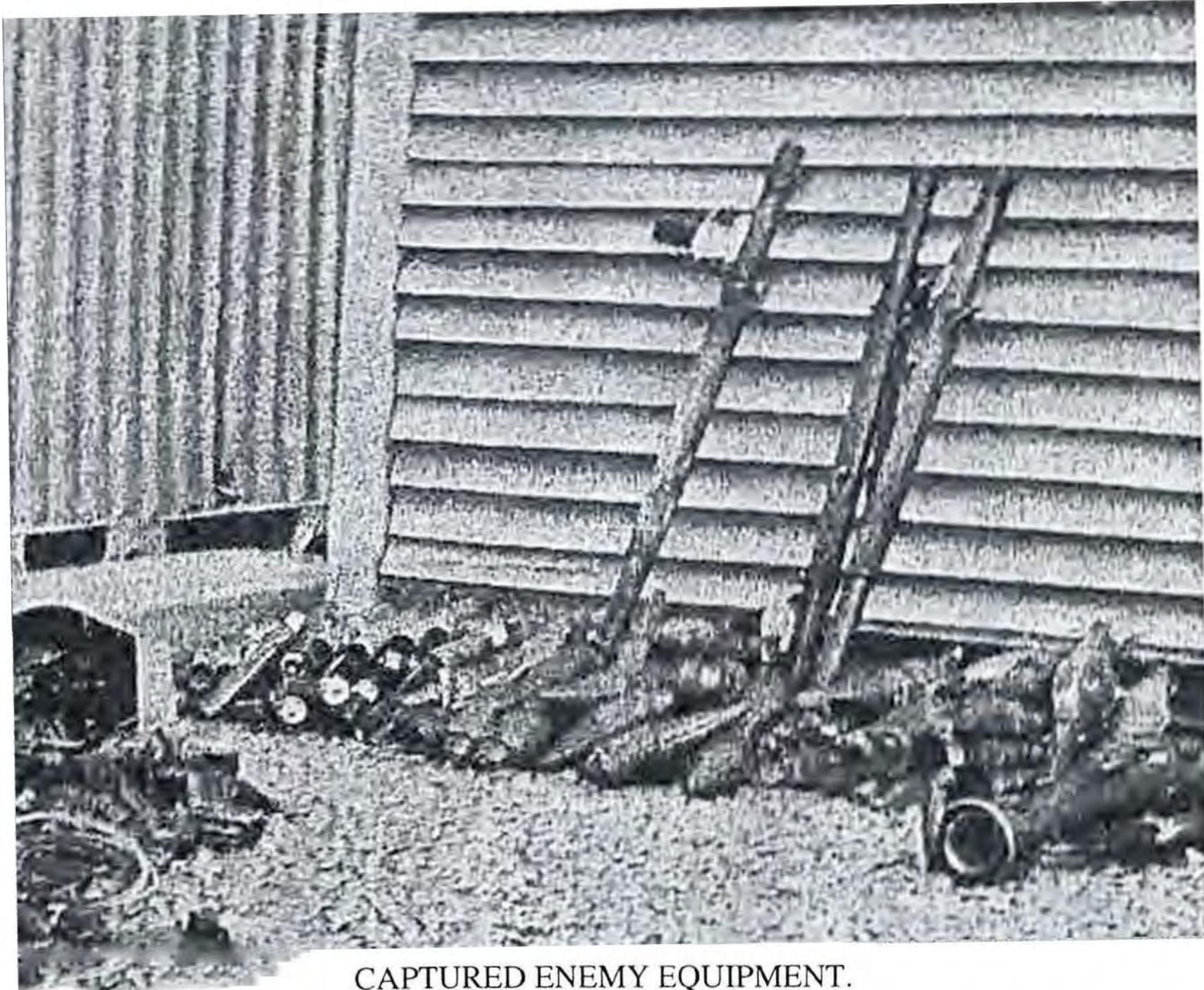






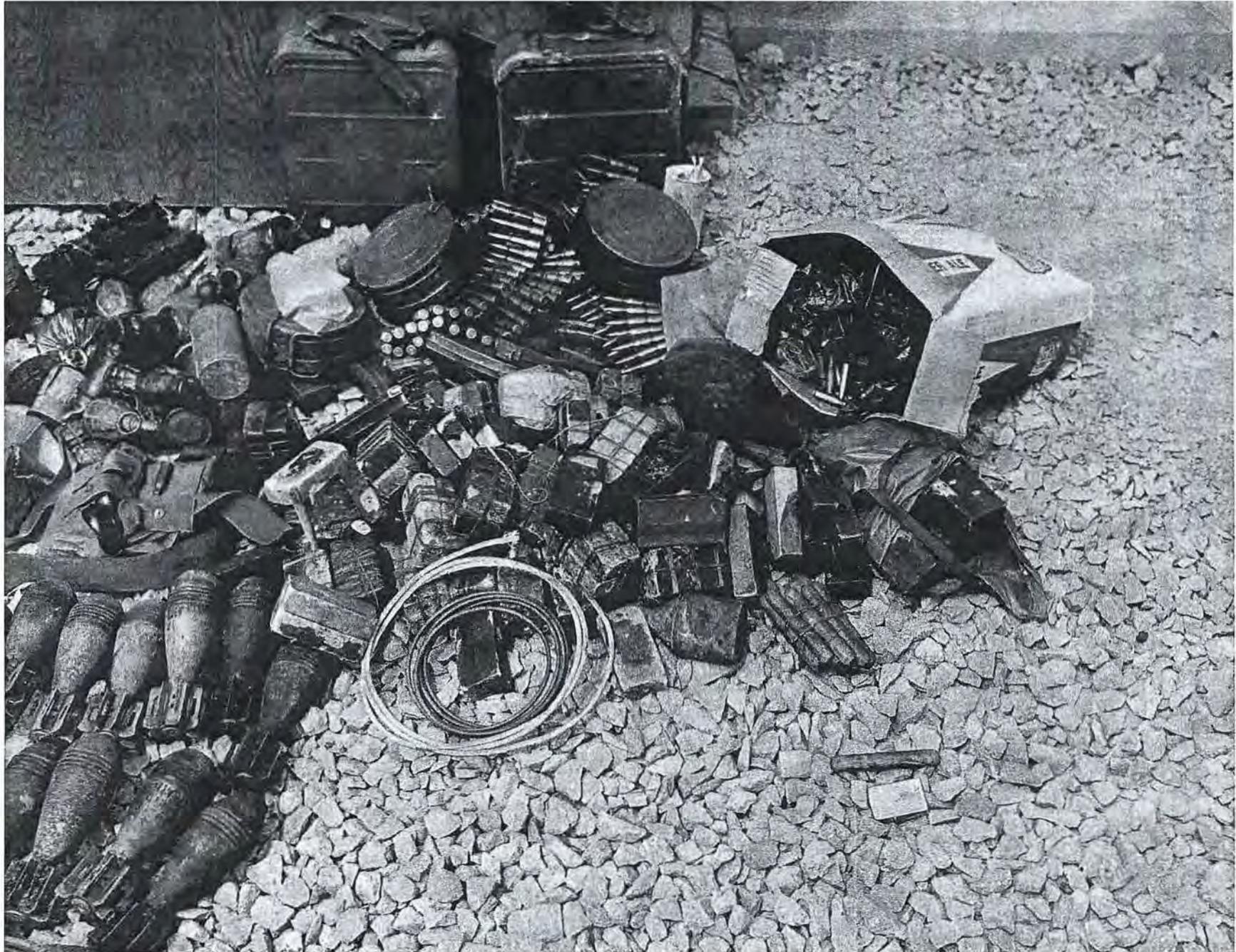


CAPTURED ENEMY EQUIPMENT



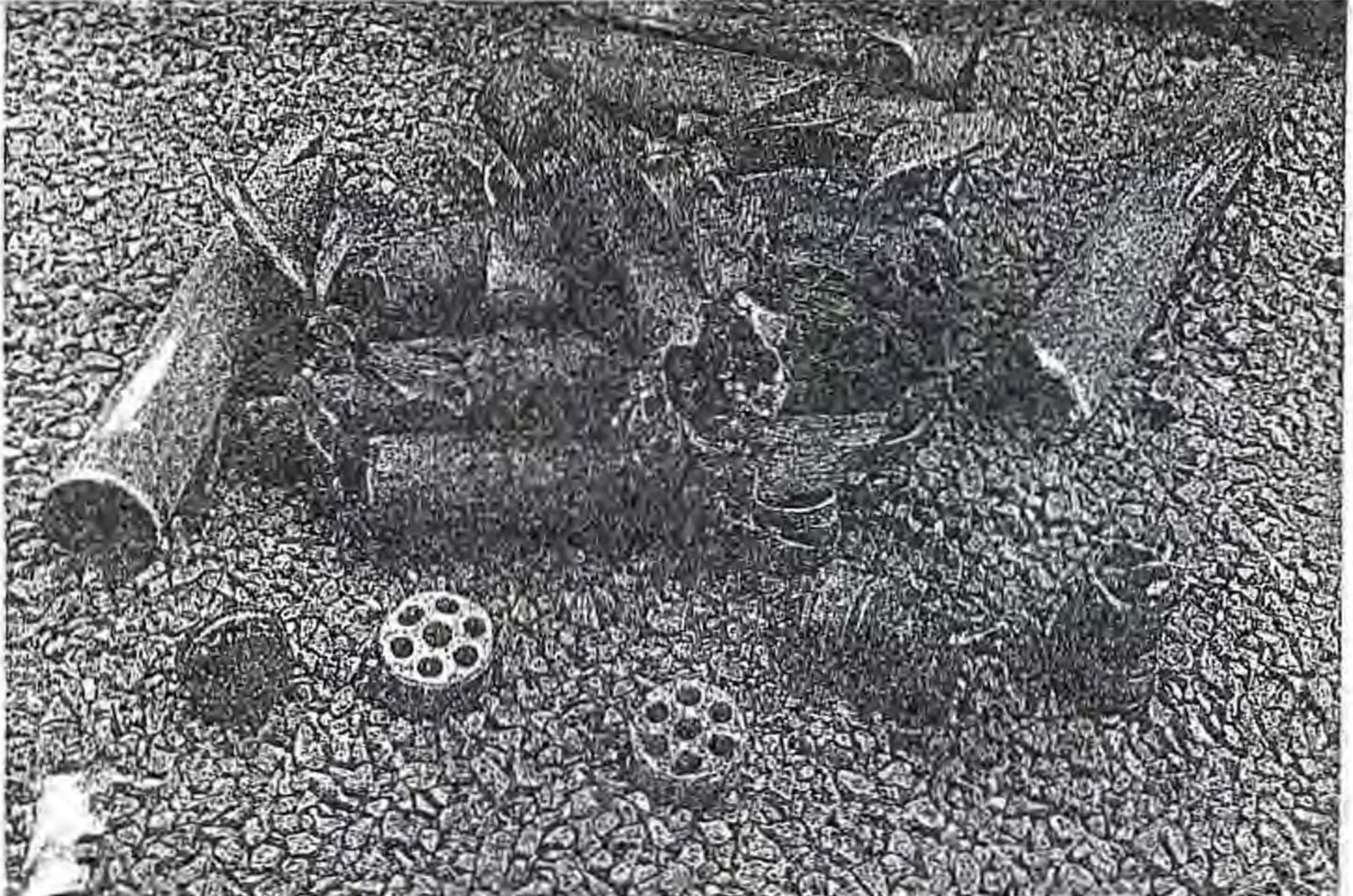
CAPTURED ENEMY EQUIPMENT.







REMNANTS OF ENEMY 122mm ROCKETS.



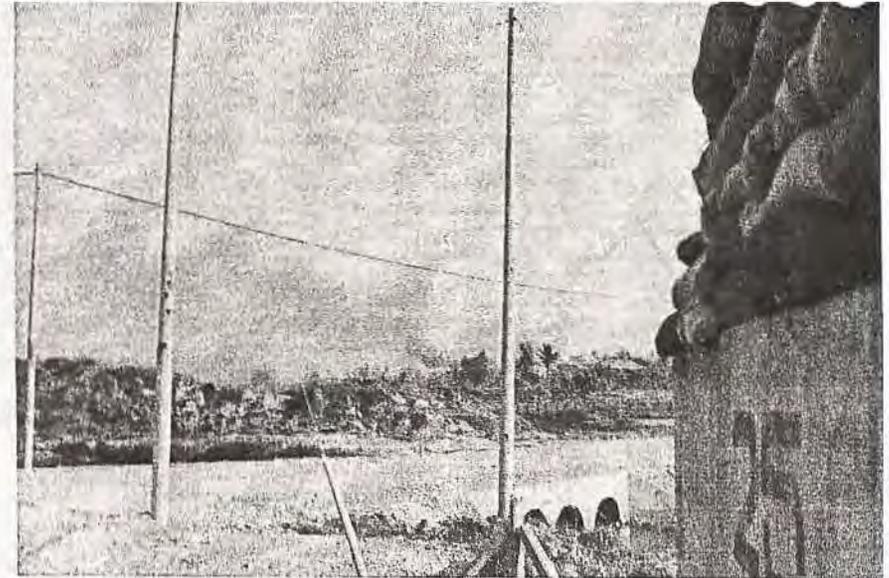
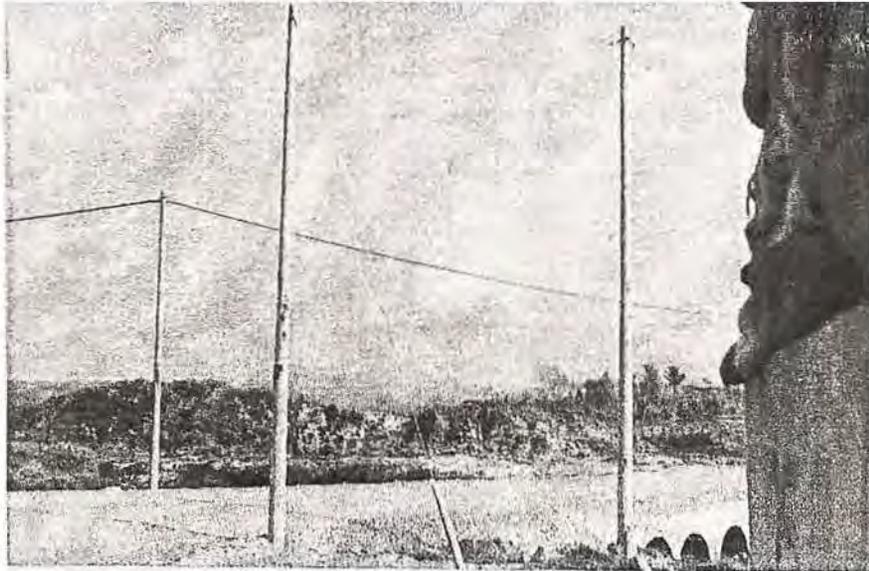
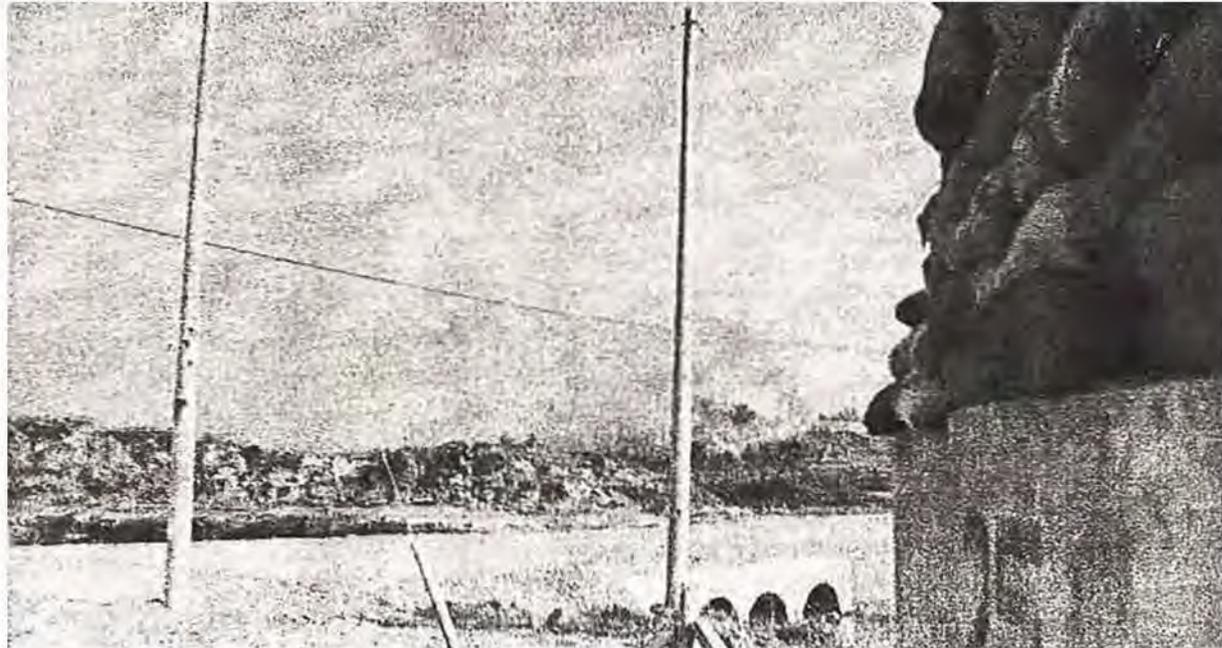




Squadron officers prepared to go on a night ambush. Left to Right: Lt. Siedlanz (Base Police Officer), Lt. Col. Miller (Sqdn. Cmdr.), Lt. Smith (Day Flight Cmdr.)

Squadron NCO's preparing to go on an operation with 173rd Airborne or on an ambush. I can't remember which.





Photos taken from Bunker Hill #10. All the enemy had been driven off base except for stagglers and wounded. After the SP's had driven the enemy off base our aircraft could take-off and their bomb hits can be seen in the photos. The US Army arrived after day light and did an excellent job of killing or running the enemy back inside the jungle.



Bunker Hill-10: View from the bunker's roof, facing N/E



Bunker Hill-10: View to the N/E, from the bunker's roof.



Bunker Hill-10: View to N/E from roof.



Bunker Hill-10: View E from rooftop, beside the turret.

After Action Reports

D R A F T

At approximately 0320 hrs. the K-9 handler (#1) transmitted that a penetration was being made near his post. Immediately, Bunker Hill #10, (#2) the listening posts, and another K-9 handler (#4) confirmed the report and exchanged small arms fire. Two K-9 supervisors and a Security Police Officer in the vicinity of Bunker Hill #10 on a post check proceeded to Bunker Hill #10. A three man SAT patrolling the east perimeter, advanced to Bunker Hill #10. A QRF of nine security policemen and augmentees was dispatched from their standby position at Bunker Hill #9 (5) to Bunker Hill #10. The QRF was armed with one (1) M .60 machine gun and a .40 MM grenade launcher, the SAT was armed with one (1) M .60 machine gun and a grenade launcher, and the two security policemen and one augmentee on duty in Bunker Hill #10 were armed with one (1) M .60 machine gun, and a grenade launcher. All other personnel were armed with an M-16 rifles. As soon as the warning was given the operations officer who was on a post check was dispatched to Bunker Hill #10 to assume command. Due to the rocket attack at 0315 hours power failed in the primary CSC, and the alternate CSC, located at the Law Enforcement desk assumed control.

The VC were penetrating the perimeter at four areas. (A-B-C-D), and attempting at another area (E), where they were stopped by the gunships. Helicopter gunships and flareships on alert circled the area of the penetration. The Dong Dai Sensitive Area Command Post was contacted and requested that gunships and flareships concentrate on the east. CSC was not in direct contact with the gunships because the helicopter liaison officer was wounded at Bunker Hill #10 when he proceeded to the bunker with the Security Operations Officer.

Almost immediately upon reaching Bunker Hill #10 the Operation Officer reported receiving direct hits from RPG2 & RPG7 rockets fired from directly across the road. Subsequent investigation showed that Bunker Hill #10 received five (5) direct hits and about 10 to 15 indirect rocket hits. Motors, fired from the village also fell

among the personnel at Bunker Hill #10, most of whom were deployed across the road to the north of the bunker.

At 0345 hours the power in Law enforcement failed. The control personnel on the alternate CSC were preparing to move to a water tower with a portable radio when the generator at the primary CSC started. The primary CSC again assumed control. A QRF located at Bunker Hill #8 (#6) was deployed north to south from Bunker Hill #8 to the taxi-way. Another QRF (#7) was dispatched from the barracks area and deployed around Bunker Hill #9.

Shortly, the sentry dog teams posted north to south, east of the over run, reported VC in the field to all sides of them (#8). The listening posts (LP) east of Bunker Hill #10 withdrew north, and the two LP's south of Bunker Hill #10 withdrew west and reported that the VC had infiltrated to the rear of Bunker Hill #10. Bunker Hill #10 and the personnel defending it were soon surrounded but continued to fight throughout the night and on into the day without relinquishing Bunker Hill #10 to the enemy.

Many heroic acts occurred in or near Bunker Hill #10. The K-9 handler who initially sounded the alarm was immediately wounded and his dog killed. The Operations Officer continued to direct the defense of Bunker Hill #10 until he was killed by a direct hit from a rocket. A Staff Sergeant assumed command and directed the defense until 1600 hours that afternoon. An ammunition truck was driven to Bunker Hill #10 in the midst of the battle. Wounded were placed in a jeep and evacuated to safety through enemy fire. Machine guns were fired from the hip and Grenade launchers were fired point blank at the enemy.

CSC gave the order for the sentry dog handlers posted along the north side of the runway to fall back south of the runway to prevent any infiltration from the north. The two eastern most K-9 handlers along the runway curled south to Bunker Hill #8 to prevent infiltration past Bunker Hill #8.

Eventually, some VC infiltrated as far west as the engine test stand (#9). An assault was launched from Bunker Hill #9 to retake the test stand but as soon as it was retaken the gun ships strafed it and forced a withdrawal to Bunker Hill #9.

About 0530 hours the regional forces sent a platoon on base to relieve their two outpost positions. (#10). The Operations Sergeant was dispatched to direct them but they could not proceed past Bunker Hill #10 where they halted and formed a defensive circle.

As dawn broke the Flight Officer formed a team of 75 security policemen and augmentees to sweep from the east taxi-way (#11) east to the perimeter fence. A QRF was dispatched to the north east corner, formed a line and prepared to sweep south. Sentry dogs were used in the initial part of the sweep from west to east.

At dawn organized resistance was broken except for three areas. They were, the test stand, the dearming pad (#12) and a reinforced squad located in the field (#13).

The test stand was virtually a fortress as it was reveted and had jet engines and related equipment around which the VC could position themselves. A security police officer and sergeant led an assault and the test stand was swept clear of the enemy in an exchange of hand grenades. One augmentee was killed on the test stand.

The dearming pad was next. A small shack and a personnel bunker gave the VC good cover. At least one VC with a rocket launcher could be seen on the pad. The Vietnamese Security Police were requested to demolish the shack with their 57 M recoilless rocket launcher after choppers had strafed the area. Sketchy contact was maintained between GSC and the helicopter via the control tower. As the VC fled from the dearming pad they were shot. A loud speaker announcement to surrender before firing the 57 RH went unneeded.

The sweep started and many VC were either captured or killed. The VC in groups

of two to six reacted differently. Some stood and fired, others ran, many attempted to hide, some of the wounded attempted to throw grenades as the security police approached, and one committed suicide rather than surrender. Several reluctantly surrendered. A few mortar and rocket rounds were fired in a feeble attempt to cover the VC withdrawal. The sweep lasted four hours. For two days isolated VC were still being hunted and captured.

A total of 139 bodies were recovered between the perimeter fence and the de-arming test pad cell area. Twenty-five (25) prisoners were captured.

Casualties suffered by the security forces, 2 dead and ten wounded.

AFSC 811X0

Problem: Security of Air Force Installations.

Cause: When I left Vietnam the responsibility of defending jointly occupied VNAF-USAF air bases was divided. At my base, Bien Hoa, four different services had some degree of responsibility. They were the RVAN, U.S. Army QC's (VNAF Security Police), and USAF Security Police. When the chips were down, and the base was attacked by an enemy regiment, with one battalion gaining access onto the base, the only ground force which engaged the enemy for the first four hours was the USAF Security Police. The security police were supported by gunships of a US Army Aviation Battalion which were tenants on the base and therefore had a direct interest in insuring the base was not over-run. Without the gunships it is doubtful if the security police could have stopped the enemy from overrunning the base. At daylight, US Army ground forces engaged the remainder of the enemy regiment which had not penetrated the base and successfully kept the remainder of the enemy off the base.

Action Taken: Many hours of liaison among the various non USAF units were conducted by myself and members of the security police squadron. The purpose of the liaison was to impress upon the Army their responsibility to defend the air base. The RVAN and US Army units had other missions besides Air Base Security which accounted for no US Army combat elements being present when the attack finally came. The truth of the matter is that most US Army commanders disliked guarding air bases and would rather have been out in the jungle chasing the VC. In the case of the RVAN units, they were not regular army units (they were Regional Forces battalions) and were in a poor state of training, morale and equipment. The crux of the matter boils down that there is no one commander in charge of on or off base defense; I'm sure you will find the above statement difficult to believe, but it is true.

Effectiveness: The "Liaison" action taken did not prove effective. Bien Hoa was fortunate that the security police took the position that, "The security police were solely responsible for defending Bien Hoa and any aid received from other units would be appreciated, but not expected." If the security police had depended upon other units, as they were supposed to do, it is certain the aircraft would have been destroyed. As it was no aircraft were damaged by the ground attack although some enemy elements penetrated to within 250 yards of the aircraft.

AFSC 811K0

Problem: Manning of Security Police.

Cause: When I left Vietnam security policemen were allocated to a great degree on the size of the base and the amount of terrain within the base perimeter. At the newer bases the base perimeter was extended way beyond the aircraft parking area or other Category 1 restricted areas. This extension made the bases much larger than the older bases which were left by the French. In most cases the perimeter of the older bases was adjacent to aircraft parking areas. In many cases the perimeter could or would not be extended because towns had built-up or the Vietnamese had established homes near and on the perimeter. The situation became more aggravated when the USAF moved into these old bases and could find no place to build new facilities except just inside the perimeter. At my base the bomb dump extended to within fifty yards of the perimeter and the aircraft parking area to within 100 yards. In my opinion manning of the security forces should take into consideration the maneuvering room available by the defense force. Since most ground attacks are not detected until the enemy is on or over the perimeter wire, a base whose perimeter is a long way from the restricted areas should not be manned heavier solely because they have more terrain, than a base whose perimeter is adjacent to restricted areas. A base with no area between the perimeter and restricted areas must fight from where they stand when the enemy is detected. To fall back, or allot time to rush security forces to the enemy detected area is inviting a loss of the category 1 equipment. Those bases who have restricted areas close to the perimeter must have enough security force personnel in place at the time of the attack to stop the enemy. The lack of security force maneuverability not the amount of terrain owned by the base should be taken into consideration on unit manning documents.

AFSC 811K0

Problem: Personnel safety during rocket attacks.

Cause: Two story barracks, During rocket or mortar attack personnel living on the top floor of dormitories are more prone to become a casualty than personnel living on the bottom floor.

Action Taken: Shift workers who worked at night were placed in the top story in hopes they would not be in the barracks. Offices were placed on top floors but in most cases the top floors were still occupied with airmen who slept there. Also, several staff studies were written recommending no more two story dormitories be built. When I left Vietnam two story dormitories were still being constructed which will result in more casualties.

AFSC 811K0

Problem: Too much close-in protection and not enough perimeter protection.

Cause: PACAF and 7th A.F. requirements place too much emphasis on security forces being deployed on the immediate perimeter of aircraft parking areas and other restricted areas. Very little emphasis is placed on security forces being positioned on the base perimeter. Perhaps the theory was that forces other than USAF were primarily responsible for perimeter security and USAF security forces were primarily responsible for guarding against sabotage. I know of no case in Vietnam where aircraft or other category 1 items were destroyed by overt means. In every case covert means were used whereby the enemy came over or through the perimeter fence. Also, with the enemies extensive use of RPG rockets, which have a range of 150 or more yards they do not have to get next to their target and destroy it with sabotage devices. I believe much more emphasis must be placed on the perimeter defense, or at least perimeter detection.

Action Taken: At our base we took personnel from close-in protection and placed them on the perimeter, and were successful in detecting and stopping all enemy attacks except rocket and mortars.

Problem: The USAF depends too much upon non USAF forces to defend its bases.

Cause: In my opinion the USAF must have in place on all of its air bases a unit capable of defending the base. This unit should be completely under USAF command. The unit must have an intelligence capability. The intelligence capability should be ground oriented not air oriented as our wing intelligence centers are. The intelligence capability should include air and ground units as well as a small overt intelligence gathering unit to replace the OSI. All ground intelligence gathering units should be under the direct command of the base defense commander. Much more sophisticated detection equipment should be assigned. Larger crew served weapons are a must. (At our base the security police had nothing larger than light machine guns and when the enemy became entrenched in bunkers they had overrun, recoilless rifles had to be borrowed from the Vietnamese). A flare capability and especially helicopter gunship and helicopter firefly capability, permanently assigned to the base defense commander, must be included. At the present time all aircraft which include flare ships and US Army helicopter fireflies and gunships are under the control of the DASC. If the DASC determines the available aircraft are needed elsewhere the base defense commander has no air support.

Action Taken: At our base a US Army helicopter batallion was in place as a tenant unit. They had a vested interest in protecting the base and agreed to place gunships at the disposal of the base defense commander. A liaison officer from the batallion was assigned to Central Security Control to insure support. Light

anti-tank weapons and on occasions armored personnel carriers were "borrowed" from neighboring Army units.

Effectiveness: At our base the procedures outlined above were effective, but complete dependence was placed on the personalities of the base defense personnel and their abilities to convince army commanders of the gravity of the situation.

Problem: Lack of efficiency of Vietnamese security force personnel.

Cause: I was most fortunate in having an outstanding Vietnamese counterpart. He and his NCOIC (a Chief Master Sgt) were aggressive, anti-VC, and very pro American. They were open to suggestions and tried very hard to provide a sound defense posture. The primary problem was that they had little or no training and their personnel lacked sufficient leadership. The Vietnamese Air Force security force did not lack valor but in several instances undue casualties were taken and the enemy slipped away because leadership and training was lacking. The Vietnamese should be intergrated into the USAF security force. A "joint" force, is not the solution as this will place the Vietnamese in command as they "own" the base.

Action Taken: Liaison officers and NCOs were placed in the VNAF central security control. VNAF security police were invited to patrol with USAF security police. A close social and working repore was established between security police - VNAF security force officers and NCOs, and the USAF security police squadron adopted the VNAF security police squadron as its civic action project.

Effectiveness: As a result of the above program the VNAF did not hinder security, nor did they add much to the security posture.

AFSC 811X0

Problem: Lack of accurate enemy intelligence.

Cause: During the night of the attack the enemy regiment dressed in NVA uniforms walked nine hours to reach the base. They walked past a 50,000 man US Army Camp (Long Bien Post), ARVN Ranger permanent installation, III Corp ARVN HQ, 101st US Division base camp, staged in a village 200 yards off base, proceeded by two ARVN ambush sites, past two ARVN outposts on the base perimeter, over two base perimeter fences, through a mine field and remained undetected until observed by a USAF Security Police K-9 team. I fail to understand how such a large enemy force could get close to the base much less get on base without being reported by intelligence units.

Action Taken: Many manhours are expended by the security police coordinating with the various free world forces within an 8 mile radius of the base. The purpose of these liaison visits are to encourage these free world units to pass-on intelligence information, especially intelligence of an impending attack on the base. In most instances air bases because of their size, strategic importance and immobility are the prime enemy targets in the area. Normal intelligence channels could not be relied upon and person to person contacts among the various base security officers was the next best system. Air Force bases were prohibited from sending reconnaissance teams off base. Perhaps this area could be explored so that A.F. bases could be assigned the responsibility of a reconnaissance team. The present system of the OSI being assigned the responsibility of off base intelligence is completely unsatisfactory.

Effectiveness: None of the above was effective as the enemy was not discovered until he was on base.

AFSC 811X0

Problem: Lack of base experience at A.F. level.

Cause: During my tour in 7th A.F. only one officer assigned to the IGS office at 7th A. F. Hq had any appreciable duty time at a 7th A.F. Base. This officer was a Lt. Many times officers at base level felt the staff officers had no feel for the various problems on the base. I believe this was more than just the normal base level feeling that, "Hqs doesn't understand the problem." The type of warfare experienced by the security police is new to the career field. Complete base defense responsibility, not in theory but in actuality, was never envisioned, but is a reality, and officers who have base level experience should be assigned to 7th A.F. staff jobs.

Action: I know of no action taken other than suggestions by specific officers assigned at base level. I recommend many of the staff positions be manned from security police officers who have completed at least half their tour at a SEA base.

AFSC 811X0

Problem: Not familiar enough with assigned weapons.

Cause: Not enough weapons firing. Not trained on a number of the weapons they will be armed with in SEA.

Action Taken: Many hours of range firing must be conducted after the security policemen arrives at his SEA base.

Effectiveness: Good, except in some cases not enough ammunition was on hand to conduct sufficient training.

The following are copies of the 3rd TFW Daily Bulletents. Copies of articles sent to me by squadron members from the USAF Airmen Magazine, Pacific Stars and Stripes, 7th Air Force Newspaper and other articles.



• OFFICIAL DAILY BULLETIN •

HEADQUARTERS 3rd TACTICAL FIGHTER WING
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96327

DAILY BULLETIN NO. 29

ADDED OFFICIAL

NORMAL OPERATIONS RESUME AT BIEN HOA: Bien Hoa Air Base returned to security condition gray and normal operations on Saturday, 3 February 1968. The area of the base itself has been secured by the men and augmentees of the 3rd Security Police Squadron. Around the perimeter of the base, strong Army forces have routed the enemy. All units on the base are to resume normal operations.

SUMMARY OF THE ATTACK: The first rocket round fell on Bien Hoa at 0300 hours, 31 January 1968. The bombardment lasted for about ten minutes. At the same time enemy sapper teams attempted to penetrate the base at the east end of the runway. They were stopped by Security Policemen and augmentees at the east end of the runway in the arm/dearm area and the jet engine test cell. These forces were pinned down until dawn by the Security Police, the QC, and Army helicopters from the 145th Aviation Battalion. The VC were routed from the area by mid-day of the 31st. Air strikes from the 3rd Wing pounded a village to the east of the base that afternoon, blocking the retreat of the enemy. Several sweeps of the east end of the base were made by Security Police forces. To date 65 enemy dead have been found on the base and 24 prisoners have been captured. At no time did enemy forces penetrate either the east or west containment areas. Total enemy killed in the Bien Hoa - Long Binh area is over 800.

WING COMMANDER PRAISES BIEN HOA PERSONNEL: It is with great pride that I can say to you today "Well done" for your performance during the rocket and mortar attack on our Air Base. Every member of the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing and all the other units assigned to this base was magnificent in his reaction to the crisis. There were too many "heroes" the night of the attack to name them individually. But, if any group deserves special praise it is the men who defended this base; the members of the 3rd Security Police Squadron, the augmentees, the QC, and the crews of 145th Aviation Battalion. We all owe these men a vote of thanks and our deepest sympathy for their losses. Now that the enemy threat has diminished we have a job to do. We must return to normal. I know we have been through a lot, but I also know we can reach down a little further and bring Bien Hoa Air Base back to fighting trim and normal conditions in a minimum of time. So, let's clean-up, pick-up, and spruce-up, and show our class as the best Wing and Base in 7th Air Force.

VALOR

The Battle of Bunker Hill 10

A veteran Security Police sergeant took over when the officer in charge at the point of attack was killed defending Bien Hoa.

BY JOHN L. FRISBEE

FOR most of 1967, North Vietnam held its—and the Viet Cong's—military operations in the South at a low level in order to accumulate supplies for the massive Tet offensive that was to begin the night of January 30–31, 1968. The goal of the offensive was as much political as military; to shatter the confidence of South Vietnam's citizens in their government and to fuel the fires of antiwar sentiment that burned with increasing intensity in the United States.

A hundred cities and more than twenty air bases were attacked simultaneously by some 84,000 enemy troops in violation of a thirty-six-hour truce for celebration of the Vietnamese New Year. Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, was a prime target. To capture it, enemy forces had to neutralize the two great air bases—Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut—near the city. Two infantry battalions and a reinforced infantry company were assigned the task of penetrating Bien Hoa's defenses and destroying US and VNAF aircraft and facilities. Their carefully planned surprise attack was to follow a heavy barrage of rocket and mortar fire. But surprise was not to be. Gen. William Momyer, Commander of Seventh Air Force, doubted that North Vietnam would honor the truce. All his units were on alert, with outposts reinforced, when the attack on Bien Hoa came.

At 0300 hours on January 31, rockets and mortar shells began to fall on the flight line. SSgt. William

Piazza, a member of the 3d Security Police Squadron serving his second volunteer tour in Vietnam, was leader of a resupply team on the north side of the base. As the barrage lifted, the command center radioed a team (Def 6) responsible for the east end of the base, where the infantry attack was concentrated, to reinforce Bunker Hill 10, a large concrete bunker at the east end of the runway. About thirty men commanded by a captain were under attack there and would soon run short of ammunition. The team was stopped by sniper fire before it could reach the bunker.

Sergeant Piazza immediately ordered his men to fall back to a safe position. He then picked up the leader of Def 6 and drove his truck, loaded with ammunition, through a curtain of enemy fire to the bunker. A few minutes after he arrived, the enemy again attacked the bunker from three sides with rockets, automatic weapons, and small arms. Piazza climbed out of the bunker and returned fire with a 40-mm grenade launcher until very close support fire from a helicopter gunship forced him back inside. There he discovered that the captain in command had been killed. Piazza assumed command of the defending force as "all hell broke loose, and Control could not get anyone on the radio."

As the night wore on, a C-47 Spooky gunship that had lighted the area, enabling Piazza to direct fire from the bunker, apparently ran out of flares. Sergeant Piazza again left the shelter of the bunker to light the area with hand flares. He continued to direct the defense until Army reinforcements arrived after daylight. Then, after the wounded had been evacuated from the bunker, Piazza and four other men remained until evening without food, water, or reinforcements, spotting targets for the Army troops and providing supporting fire. When the east end of the base had been cleared, 139 en-

emy lay dead and twenty-five had been captured.

Although several aircraft were destroyed or damaged by rockets, enemy infantry and sappers never penetrated the base beyond Bunker Hill 10. The citation for the Silver Star presented to Sergeant Piazza by General Momyer summed it up: "An untold number of lives and literally hundreds of millions of dollars of aircraft and other materiel had been saved" through the gallant defense of the base, led at Bunker Hill 10 by Sergeant Piazza.

The Tet offensive was soundly defeated at Bien Hoa and throughout South Vietnam. Of the 84,000 enemy troops thrown into that failed gamble, some 45,000 are believed to have been killed and another 24,000 wounded. It was not, as some journalists of that day reported, a military defeat for the US and South Vietnam. The negative political repercussion of those reports in this country is another story.

SSgt. William Piazza, one of the heroes of Tet, volunteered for a third tour of duty in Vietnam. Today he is a master sergeant stationed at Robins AFB, Ga. ■



Seventh Air Force Commander Gen. William Momyer pins on the Silver Star awarded to SSgt. William Piazza.

Valor

By John L. Frisbee, Contributing Editor

Hero of Bien Hoa

Bien Hoa was a key to the enemy's capture of Saigon. It had to be held at all costs.

OF SOME 160 officers and airmen who were awarded the Air Force Cross in southeast Asia, only two of the officers were not aircrew members. Both were security police officers—Capt. Reginald V. Maisey, Jr., and Capt. Garth A. Wright. Both were decorated for extraordinary valor during North Vietnam's Tet Offensive of January 1968. This is the story of Captain Maisey's heroic leadership of men assigned to the 3d Security Police Squadron at Bien Hoa AB near Saigon.

Older readers and students of the Vietnam War will remember the Tet Offensive as a critical turning point in domestic support of our military commitment in southeast Asia. The media portrayed Tet as a defeat for American forces, which, in their view, had little chance of saving South Vietnam at an acceptable cost.

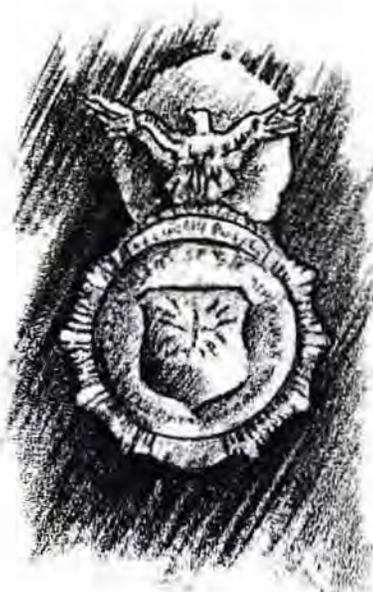
In reality, Tet was a smashing defeat for North Vietnam, which had assembled an estimated 84,000 of its own and Viet Cong troops for an assault on major cities and military bases throughout South Vietnam. All of their strikes were turned back within a few days, with the exception of the city of Hue, parts of which were taken and held by the enemy until March. More than half of the invading force is believed to have been killed and many more wounded.

A major objective of the offensive was to capture Saigon, South Vietnam's capital. The North counted on support by the South Vietnamese populace and relied heavily on surprise since a cease-fire had been negotiated for the Tet holidays. Neither happened. American commanders did not believe the North would honor the cease-fire and hence were on alert when the country-wide offensive began between 3:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. on January 31.

Key to the capture of Saigon was seizure of the huge US air bases—Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut—a few

miles to the north and west of the city. At 0300 hours the enemy hit Bien Hoa with two infantry battalions and a reinforced infantry company. About sixty percent of the attackers were North Vietnamese regulars, especially trained for the operation.

In order to reach the flight line, they had to bypass Bunker Hill 10 at the east end of the base. There, a



reinforced concrete bunker built by the French when they controlled Indochina was lightly manned by the 3d Security Police Squadron. The attack started with a ten-minute rocket bombardment of the bunker, followed by infiltration of a large number of Communist troops who continued to blast the bunker with rockets and automatic weapons.

When the attack began, Captain Maisey was at the west end of the base. He knew that holding Bunker Hill 10 was critical to defending the base. Maisey moved immediately to the Central Security Command Post and volunteered to lead the defense of the bunker, occupied by a handful of men who were firing furiously

through the gun ports of the octagonal structure. Outside were thirty to forty security police who had come to the aid of their comrades. Maisey had to drive through the enemy's field of fire but, miraculously, was unhurt.

To organize the defense and to communicate by radio with the command post, Captain Maisey had to leave the relative security of the bunker, exposing himself to enemy fire. This he did many times. His bravery and skill in directing the defense were an inspiration to the small force of security police, vastly outnumbered by the enemy and with a third of the defenders wounded.

The ferocious battle continued with enemy troops on three sides of the bunker. Ammunition soon was running low. SSgt. William Piazza drove his truck loaded with ammunition through a hail of fire to save the defenders [see "Valor: The Battle of Bunker Hill 10," January 1985, p. 99]. Sergeant Piazza was shortly to find himself in command of the defense.

On one of his sorties out of the bunker, Captain Maisey was hit by enemy fire but continued his report to the command post and his encouragement to his men. Now supported by helicopter gunships and an AC-47 "Spooky," they still were in imminent danger of being overrun.

At about 0430 hours, Captain Maisey again left the bunker to contact the command post. He was hit by a rocket and killed instantly, but the men he had led so brilliantly continued to contain the enemy until Army reinforcements arrived at dawn. Many lives and millions of dollars in aircraft had been saved by holding Bunker Hill 10 against a massive assault. For leadership of the defense at the cost of his own life, Captain Maisey was awarded the Air Force Cross posthumously.

Today an imposing building at Bolling AFB, D. C., bears the name of this gallant man, the first nonrated Air Force officer to be awarded the nation's second highest decoration for valor. ■

Bien Hoa Defenders Repulse VC

BIEN HOA (7AF)—Following a recent attack on Bien Hoa AB by the Viet Cong, the air base was able to make a rapid and complete recovery within a short time.

The first enemy rocket round fell on Bien Hoa in the morning; and, within minutes, aircraft were operating from the air base in support of the base defense.

Inter-service cooperation between the Air Force, Army and Vietnamese forces contributed greatly to the successful defense of the base and the speedy re-

opening of the runway.

The VC bombarded Bien Hoa for 10 minutes with rockets and mortars and at the same time enemy ground forces penetrated the east perimeter of the base.

Bien Hoa defense and recovery personnel were poised and ready for the VC. Attacks at other bases the night before had given them warning. Members of the 3rd Security Police Squadron and augmentees were manning guard posts on the perimeter, along with their Vietnamese counterparts.

U.S. Army units—the 145th

Aviation Battalion and elements of the 101st Airborne Division—were standing by to lend support with their armed helicopters and combat troops.

When the all clear sounded after the mortar and rocket attack, Bien Hoa became a beehive of activity as personnel began to return it to combat ready status.

Security forces cornered the attackers 400 yards inside the east perimeter on the end of the runway near the jet engine test facility.

AH-1G Huey Cobra helicopters

from the 145th Aviation Battalion, firing rockets and mini-guns, combined with the security police to kill the infiltrators in a battle that lasted several hours.

To date, at least 153 enemy troops are known to have been killed at Bien Hoa and 25 suspects detained. The number of VC killed outside the perimeter has not been counted.

The fighting outside the east perimeter of the base continued throughout the day as troops from the 101st Airborne Division, aided by Huey Cobra gunships

mopped up the remaining VC.

Swarms of helicopters stayed in the air all day long, attacking the fleeing VC whenever they could be found.

In the afternoon, F-100 Super-sabre pilots from Bien Hoa bombed and strafed a VC concentration a few miles east of the base.

There was a total of 52 combat sorties flown by 3rd TFW F-100 and A-37 aircraft.

Besides flying missions in defense of the base, the 3rd TFW also supported search and destroy operations in the Republic.



Phantoms Repel Enemy Regiment

CAM RANH BAY—Air Force F-4 Phantom pilots scrambling from Cam Ranh Bay AB recently were credited with repelling two battalions of North Vietnamese Army 141st Regiment troops, killing 30.

Pilots of the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing were alerted by elements of the U.S. Army 25th Infantry Division that they were under heavy mortar and recoilless rifle fire as well as a concentrated ground attack at their base camp at Bo Tuc.

When the Phantoms arrived, the North Vietnamese Army force had penetrated the base

ated in the attack, all members of the 557th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Cam Ranh Bay, were Capt. Raymond J. Reeves Jr., Valdosta, Ga.; 1st Lt. John S. Rutter, Flint, Mich., Capt. William F. Hughes, Henderson, Tex., and 1st Lt. Richard L. Maki, Spring Valley, Calif.

Canadian Services

General Momyer Awards Sergeant With Silver Star

BIEN HOA — SSgt. William Piazza, a member of the 3rd Security Police Squadron at Bien Hoa AB has been awarded the Silver Star, the nation's third highest decoration for valor by Gen. William W. Momyer, commander of Seventh Air Force.

Piazza, a native of Wichita Falls, Tex., received the medal for gallant and meritorious service during the enemy attack on Bien Hoa, Jan. 31.

Piazza was assigned to Defense 5, a mobile resupply unit. He made a run to Bunker Hill 10, which was where the enemy ground forces were attempting to penetrate the base.

When he arrived at the

bunker, his support was needed, so he stayed.

Small arms fire could be seen all through the area. Then, B-40 rockets fired by the enemy came in. A total of 12 rounds hit the old French fortification. One of the rounds killed the officer in charge and wounded our other defenders. Piazza then took charge of Bunker Hill 10.

The Viet Cong and NVA (North Vietnamese Army) made repeated attempts to overrun the outpost but, with the sergeant directing the defense, they were repulsed.

The battle raged for more than six hours. When Piazza left, 153 VC and NVA had been killed and 25 had been detained near his post.



FOR GALLANTRY—Gen. William W. Momyer presents SSgt. William Piazza with the Silver Star for gallant and meritorious service during the Jan. 31 enemy attack on Bien Hoa AB. (USAF PHOTO)





Sgt. Pete Piazza receives the Silver Star medal from 7th Air Force Commander General Momyer. Sgt. Piazza got in a dual with enemy RPG gunners and on his 13th round he put a rifle grenade into the enemy's ammo pile. Bodies flew all "which-ways."

Other squadron recipients of the Silver Star were Sgt. Larry Sawyer and Capt. Marty Strone. Sgt. Sawyer repeatedly removed the wounded while under fire.

Capt. Strone was the midnight flight Commander. His leadership was apparent, all during the battle. Exposing himself to enemy fire he organized and led the skirmish line that drove the enemy from the field.

Numerous personnel received the Bronz Star with V device and all squadron members received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with V (Valor) device.

Heroic Sergeant Says War Role Unlike Movies

BIEN HOA — TSgt. Larry H. Sawyer, Los Angeles, 3rd Security Police Squadron, recently received the Silver Star for heroism. Presentation of the medal was made by Gen. George Brown, Seventh Air Force Commander during a visit to Bien Hoa AB.

Sergeant Sawyer, who earned the award for his actions during the Tet attack against the base early this year, said, "It's not at all like they show it in the movies."

On the night of Jan. 31, he was on duty as a security police supervisor when the attack came. The enemy forces launched a sustained rocket and mortar attack with the brunt of their penetration effort concentrated on a bunker blocking the east end of the base.

The NCO was in charge of a 12-man Quick Reaction Team deployed near the bunker. Shortly after the attack began he noticed that two of his men had been wounded. He quickly directed his men to load the wounded into a jeep, and with enemy fire still intense, he evacuated the men to the dispensary.

"After I got to the dispensary got to thinking that my men back at the bunker would be

running low on ammunition, so I went to the squadron armory and loaded up with ammo boxes," he said.

Sergeant Sawyer drove back through the barrage of machine gun fire once again and delivered the ammunition. Later, he again evacuated wounded men and once more returned to the bunker.

"I managed to evacuate six of my men who were wounded during the course of the attack," he added, "each time picking up more ammo to bring back."

The citation accompanying his award stated, in part, "His ammunition resupply actions were instrumental in thwarting the advance of the infiltrators, thus saving millions of dollars worth of equipment only a few hundred meters from the defense line."



Receives AF Citation

SGT. FREDERICK W. BROWN, RIGHT, SON OF Mr. and Mrs. Collins W. Brown, Richmondville received the Air Force Commendation medal at ceremonies on Feb. 9 at Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota. The award read in part: Airman First Class Frederick W. Brown distinguished himself by meritorious service as a Security policeman, Weapons Systems Security, 3rd Security Police Squadron, Bien Hoa Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, from November 1967 to Sept. 15, 1968. During this period, Airman Brown's outstanding professionalism and skill aided immeasurably in the security of vital combat priority resources against the ever present threat of Viet Cong sabotage and attack. The energetic application of his knowledge, coupled with his devotion to duty, played a significant role in contributing to the United States Air Force mission in Southeast Asia. The distinctive accomplishments of Airman Brown reflect credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Bird Dog Attacks

BIEN HOA—The nightly vigil kept by the airborne spotters of the 19th Tactical Air Support Squadron (TASS), here, is a vital link in the network which warns the base of rocket or mortar attacks.

Each night, all night, the crews, flying O-1 Bird Dog and O-2 Super Skymaster aircraft, orbit their assigned areas surrounding the base.

"Coordination is the key to the whole operation," said Maj. Roy E. Notley, Coalinga, Calif., senior duty officer, III Corps Direct Air Support Center, (DASC). He also flies O-2 missions.

"We coordinate with AC-47 Dragonship aircraft which also fly the orbit, and with all other aircraft in the area, for obvious safety reasons. Then too, we

coordinate with local artillery units in the area and with the DASC.

"In this manner we stay fully informed of the activities of friendly forces in the area," he added.

Finally the airborne spotter maintains constant communications with the base to alert them in the event they sight a rocket launching. The few seconds warning thus obtained is vital to the base's reaction and the safety of personnel on the ground.

Spotting a rocket launching, the spotter calls in the Dragonship, artillery, or other strike aircraft in the area. He is also equipped to mark the target with smoke rockets and act as a forward air controller.

"Tied in with other links in the rocket watch network, we can alert the base and have return strikes on the area in a matter of seconds," concluded the major.

Base Defense Team Augmentees Called High Caliber Group

BIEN HOA — They are of all job descriptions — clerk-typist, supply men, flightline workers and pay clerks. Yet, when the word is given, they leave these jobs to become part of a highly qualified air base defense team.

They become air police augmentees and they are a vital link in Bien Hoa AB's combat role in Vietnam, for they provide the depth that the regular air policemen need in case of a prolonged attack against this air base.

Training for these augmentees is broken down into a two-day initial course, and then, periodic refresher courses.

Their studies range from absorbing information on local clandestine threats, security priorities, challenging procedure, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam rules of engagement, sentry tactics and weapons qualifications.

Some, who have extensive training in the M-60 machine gun, grenade launching and fur-

ther orientation on the M-16 automatic rifle, are pulling duty now with the regular forces on the night shifts.

The others are ready, at a moments notice, to take up their weapons and hold positions on the base's outer perimeter in bunkers and as riflemen.

They work under the direction of the Central Security Control the coordinating security agency at Bien Hoa.

The program is of such high caliber that it received an outstanding proficiency rating recently during a Pacific Air Forces general inspection.

Members of the 3rd Air Police Squadron training section responsible for training the airmen are: 1st Lt. David Ingram, New Brunswick, N.J., officer in charge; TSgt Charles B. Dye, Kewanee, Mo., noncommissioned officer in charge; SSgt. Arthur Estorza, Columbus, Ohio, and SSgt. Fred Leisure, Panama City, Fla., instructors.



MACHINE GUN TRAINING — A/C Brendan Cassidy, (right), Bien Hoa air police weapons technician, watches closely as A/C David Gousha, air police augmentee from 3rd Field Maintenance Squadron, fires the M-60 machine gun. Other augmentees, A/C Thomas Fewer (left), 3rd Armament and Electronics Maintenance Sq. and A2C Larrence Droste, 3rd Supply Sq., look on.

Mar. 20, 1968

SEVENTH AIR FORCE NEWS

Page 5

Ambulance Drivers Respond to Attack

BIEN HOA — From the start of the 3 a.m., Jan. 31 attack on Bien Hoa AB until later in the day when remnants of the main force of enemy were disposed of, the combat centered around the outpost of Bunker Hill 10, on the east side of the base, and

the jet engine test facility, about 100 yards away.

Right in the middle of the struggle were the men of the 3rd Tactical Dispensary.

It did not matter to the dispensary personnel on which side the wounded man had

fought. Both friend and foe were evacuated from the battle area and received the best medical care.

The teams of dispensary personnel who manned the four ambulances that brought in the wounded demonstrated a spe-

cial brand of devotion to duty.

TSgt. Charles E. Edwards, Birmingham, Ala., noncommissioned officer in charge of the dental clinic, drove the ambulance which made the first trip, 4 a.m., to Bunker Hill 10.

With him were A1C Dennis W. Fisher, a dental specialist from Houston, and Sgt. Randall W. Brook, Honolulu, an aeromedical specialist.

Edwards drove with the lights out through the intense ground fire. A bullet hit the windshield but no one was hurt. Mortar and rocket shells were exploding in the area. A friendly helicopter gunship strafed enemy positions nearby with its miniguns. "It was only a mile and a half drive out and back," said Edwards, "but it seemed like a thousand miles. Both sides were firing every weapon they had and we were in the middle."

The battle raging around Bunker Hill 10 was so intense the ambulance did not return until after daylight at 7 a.m.

By then the enemy had given up trying to take the post and were scattered throughout the area swapping gunfire with base defense forces.

Ambulances driven by Edwards and SSgt. Ernest A. Johannsson, a dental technician from Madera, Calif., were called to pick up the wounded.

Edwards brought the first wounded enemy back to the dispensary, assisted by TSgt. James V. Bridges, Charlotte, N.C., noncommissioned officer in charge of medical services for the dispensary. Two security guards accompanied them.

Johannsson brought back another wounded enemy. Assisting Johannsson was Sgt. Albert J. Shimkus Jr., a medical services

cut off his clothing, then evacuated him from the area.

At 3 p.m., SSgt. Leonardo V. Silva, Durango, Colo., a medical administration specialist, went to Bunker Hill 10 to pick up two members of the defense force. One was unconscious from heat exhaustion and the other was suffering from severe leg cramps and could not walk.

"Bullets were flying when we got there," said Silva. "We crawled 50 yards, got to the unconscious man and dragged him back to the ambulance. Then things got hectic," he said. Exploding mortar rounds pinned the medics down for 30 minutes.

"We were carrying the other man to the ambulance when a helicopter spotted some enemy nearby and opened up with its miniguns," said Silva. "The one man was able to run the rest of the way, beating us there, before he collapsed," Silva concluded.

Doctor Fights 3 Wars

PHAN RANG — Maj. Charles R. O'Briant, Fairborn, Ohio, director of medical services at Phan Rang AB, is keeping busy on three fronts. He runs the 35th U.S. Air Force Dispensary, is the flight surgeon, and directs a widespread medical civic action (MED-CAP) program.

As head of the dispensary, he controls doctors, dentists,



EMERGENCY—Interservice teamwork is displayed in the emergency room of the 91st Medical Evacuation Hospital at Phu Hiep, A1C Stephen R. Tuttle, (left) an Air Force pararescueman joins members of the Army staff in treating a Vietnamese civilian patient. Carefully watching the young medic at work are MSgt. Earl R. Parrish, Tex., (behind Tuttle), SFC Norman R. Sish, Shelby, N.C., a senior medical technician and Maj. Mary Jane K. Paguin, Pittsburgh, Pa., nurse in charge of the hospital emergency room. (USAF PHOTO)

Bien Hoa Air Police Honored

BIEN HOA — Four flights of air policemen witnessed the presentation of an Air Force Outstanding Unit Citation to the 3rd Air Police Squadron at Bien Hoa AB.

The award was presented for exceptionally meritorious service in support of military operations during the period of Nov. 8, 1965 to June 30, 1966.

The citation accompanying the award read in part, "... personnel of the 3rd Air Police Sq. unselfishly and unhesitatingly worked long hours to expand its security posture to thwart insurgent forces. Lacking the necessities for a fully functional air police squadron, members of the 3rd Air Police Sq. constructed many of their facilities during off-duty hours."

The award was presented by Col. Richard C. Catledge, 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing, Commander, during a parade ceremony on the base soccer field.

After the citation was presented to the squadron, two flights of Air Policemen and two flights of canines and handlers paraded past the reviewing stand. One hundred ninety-three men and 48 canines participated in the parade and ceremony.



MERITORIOUS SERVICE—Col. Richard C. Catledge, 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing commander at Bien Hoa AB fixes the Outstanding Unit Citation streamer to the guidon during a recent ceremony. The AFOUA was for exceptionally meritorious service in support of airlift operations.

(AIR FORCE PHOTO)



Third Security Police Squadron on Parade.

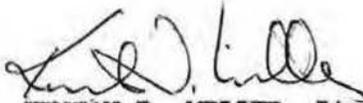
FROM: 3SPS

9 February 1968

SUBJECT: Letter of Appreciation

TO: The Thundering Third and Augmentees

1. You defeated the enemy's largest ground attack ever against a USAF base. You took more prisoners and killed more enemy than any Security Police Squadron ever has.
2. The issue was never in doubt and I know you stand ready and waiting to do it again.



KENTON D. MILLER, Lt Colonel, USAF
Commander

3 Atch

1. 7AF (C) Ltr, 2 Feb 1968.
2. 3TFW (C) Ltr, 7 Feb 1968.
3. 3CSG (C) Ltr, 9 Feb 1968.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 3D TACTICAL FIGHTER WING (PACAF)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96227



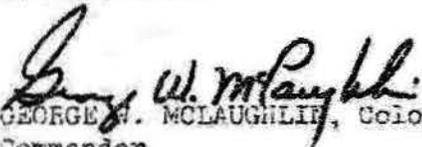
REPLY TO
ATTN: JAF C

SUBJECT: Letter of Commendation

21 Mar 68

TO: SC

It is a pleasure for me to add my congratulations and appreciation to those of Generals Westmoreland and Momyer. The 3d Security Police Squadron has the sincere gratitude of every resident of Bien Hoa Air Base.


GEORGE W. MCLAUGHLIN, Colonel, USAF
Commander

1 Atch
Ltr TAP (C), 21 Mar 68
w/1 atch

Copy to: DXI

HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96322

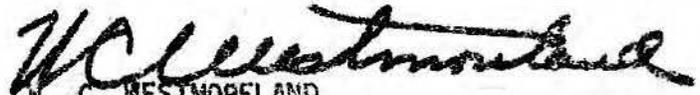
MMZTS

SUBJECT: Commendation

TO: Commander
Seventh Air Force
APO 95307

1. The recent Communist Tet Offensive posed a significant challenge to the responsiveness and effectiveness of all our forces in Vietnam. The men of the 3rd Security Police Squadron accepted this challenge and helped to frustrate the enemy's intentions. Their defense of Bien Hoa Air Base and eventual defeat of the attacking enemy force has reflected the highest traditions of the Air Force. The men of this unit can take pride in the contributions they have made to the allied efforts in Southeast Asia.

2. Please convey my congratulations to the men of the 3rd Security Police Squadron for a job well done.


N. C. WESTMORELAND
General, United States Army
Commanding

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 3D COMBAT SUPPORT GROUP (PACAF)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96327



REPLY TO:
ATTN OF: CC

29 MAR 1968

SUBJECT: Letter of Commendation

TO: BSP

1. Each man at Bien Hoa Air Base is aware that he owes a debt, which can never be repaid, for the heroic action performed by the men of the 3rd Security Police Squadron during the Tet Offensive. Each man is not only grateful for this action but for the outstanding daily performance of the Security Police Squadron. It is reassuring to know that we are protected by such dedicated men.

2. Please add my most sincere appreciation to that already expressed in the attached letters and convey my congratulations to each man in your Squadron.

LEE MCCLENDON, Colonel, USAF
Commander

1 Atch
Ltr, 3TFW (C), 28 Mar 68

GROUND DEFENSE LESSONS LEARNED

30 October 1968

1. During initial (the most crucial) periods of ground attack the USAF must be able to defend its own bases. The Army cannot and will not provide 360° protection from ground attack on a sustained basis. The Army believes its job is to seek and destroy the enemy in the field and will not consistently keep a force around an air base just for the purpose of defending the air base.
2. Air Force ground defense forces must be prepared to defend air bases as far out as the "mortar belt". They must maintain the capability to detect and destroy enemy mortar and like heavy weapons crews from firing on air bases.
3. Equipment; Air base ground defense forces must be provided with:
 - a. Heavy weapons capable of counter firing on mortar and recoilless rifles.
 - b. Armored transportation.
 - c. Defoilage equipment.
 - d. Tree and terrain leveling equipment.
 - e. Sophisticated detecting equipment such as is being developed by Colonel Duff.
4. Training for all security police must include:
 - a. Basic infantry tactics to include scouting, patrolling, ambush tactics and especially methods of requesting air and artillery strikes.
 - b. Civic action responsibilities of the individual airmen.
 - c. Intense weapons training.
5. Safe Side:
 - a. There is great resentment among many if not most field grade security police officers that Safe Side is not needed. These officers use as their reasoning the success of the regular security police units in Vietnam. These officers are resentful that Safe Side units are 100% manned while the regular ZI security police units are greatly under-manned. They have not been sold on the reason for

Safe Side and speak against Safe Side. A selling program is needed within the career field. The program received a set-back when Safe Side units were dispatched to Vietnam and dispersed among the regular security police squadrons. Members of these dispersed Safe Side units were disenchanted when they did not get a chance to go out in the jungle and fight the enemy as they were promised in their training but were given the same mission as the regular security police. Perhaps a look into the orientation training of Safe Side units is in order.

b. Paragraph 3a, of AFR 206-1, Combat Security Police (Safe Side I), dated 11 Oct 68, will haunt us in future base defense operations. This paragraph directs that deploying Safe Side units will report directly to the base commander. By performing directly for the base commander the Safe Side unit will by-pass the Base Chief of Security Police and will leave the base commander with two base defense forces and two base defense force commanders. If the in-place security police commander is a good officer he will already have a defense plan in which he would like to give the Safe Side unit a part. In addition, the in-place security police will be familiar with the situation, terrain, enemy, plus all the other aspects of local defense and may have already participated in one or more base defense battles at the scene. I do not believe the regulation should be specific as to who the Safe Side unit will be responsible to, but leave the decision to the base commander so he can choose the best commander to command the combined base defense force.

6. Security Police Officers:

a. It is my understanding that six of the seven Colonels assigned to the Security Police Directorate had little or no experience in the security police field. Not only do career security police officers resent this, but it is doubtful if these officers have a feel for security police problems especially at squadron level. New blood is essential and I heartily recommend assigning some senior officers from the operations area, but I believe assigning the majority of senior officers in the Directorate from other career fields is detrimental to the career field.

b. Some program must be instigated to recruit and keep highly qualified officers in the security police field. The caliber of many of our officers is sub-par. Not one security police Captain in the primary promotion zone in SAC was promoted in the last promotion cycle. The operations officer of my squadron in Vietnam who I relieved of duty for inability is back in the career field and is presently serving as a Base, Chief of Security Police in one of our tactical commands. Many of our excellent young security police officers are transferring to other career fields or leaving the service. Their reasons for leaving are varied but many quote the circumstances in paragraph 6a above as a large contributing factor.

7. Ground Intelligence Capability. The base defense commander must have a ground intelligence capability. My experience in Vietnam taught me that neither the OSI or the Wing Air Intelligence were capable of providing sufficient ground intelligence information.

8. Air Support: The ground defense commander must be provided tactical air support as needed. My experiences were such that air operations officers looked down their noses when tactical air support was requested by an Air Force ground-pounder. However, any infantry assistant squad leader could request air support and receive it. The Air Force ground defense commander finds himself as an outcast. The Army doesn't think he knows anything about ground fighting and the Air Force doesn't think he knows anything about the use of air power. I am not suggesting the ground defense commander have aircraft assigned to him but am suggesting a propaganda campaign to induce commanders of air bases and wings to accept the ground defense commander as an expert in his field.

KENTON D. MILLER
Lt Colonel, USAF

The Good & The Bad & The Ugly

The Bad. The USAF provided us with no base defense training. Several of us had served in the infantry and the NCO's and Officers provided training as much as they could. We were not provided any crew-served weapons and had no way to counter the mortar rocket attacks. Some of our better NCO scroungers did manage to "barter", from the US Army, a few grenade launchers and a LAW (shoulder fired anti-tank weapon) and other odds and ends. We had no armoured vehicles nor even armoured vests.

The Army had "snookered" our AF generals that the Army would secure the area outside the base. As we had a ten mile perimeter the Army could not afford enough personnel to do so. Our complaints that no Army was out there fell on deaf ears. Except for placing us on Red Alert during TET the small amount of intelligence we received was very unreliable.

I understood the AF OSI (Office of Special Investigation) was suppose to provide us with intelligence, but we received none. We only had contact with the OSI once. They convinced the Wing Commander there was a drug problem and we were directed to conduct a night raid on a barracks the OSI was positive contained narcotics. We uncovered one plastic bag that had less than two ounces of marijuana. In reality during this time in Viet Nam there was no drug problem, at least not on our base.

The "Rules of Engagement", (when to shoot and not to shoot), as passed down from 7th A.F. were not acceptable to us. Basically the rule was to shoot in self defense or to stop the enemy entering the base. We had two tall chain-link fences surrounding the perimeter with a mine field in between the fences. We had no plot for the mine field as mines had been laid by the French, Vietnamese and U.S. When the enemy penetrated the base during the TET offensive they did not set off a single mine. When the directive came down to not shoot at anyone carrying a lantern at night outside the fenceline, we did not disobey the order we only circumnavigated it. Conducting a "Mad Minute", (lining men along the perimeter and firing their weapons into the jungle for about a minute), was a no-no. When 7th A.F. investigators came to the base to look into a complaint from a "Pappa-Son", that we had killed his favorite water buffalo or shots came through his thatched roof, the investigative team always seemed to arrive the night of a fire fight on the perimeter. We would rush the team to the scene, and not being use to such gun fire, the team would return to their headquarters and report our firing into the outer perimeter was necessary to repulse sapper teams. In our eyes we thought our "Mad Minutes" let the enemy know we were on our toes and it was safer to stay away.

Our base police section not only performed normal law enforcement duties but other functions as well. They guarded the officers living areas as the F-100's were of no use without the pilots. Hundreds of Vietnamese workers were employed on the base and hundreds of others labored building runways under the supervision of U.S. civilian contractors.

One job not found at stateside bases the Base Police encountered was "policing" the two night clubs and several bars located on the base. These were owned by UNAF officers and local businessmen. Every night several bus loads of "B-Girls" would be brought on base and supplied to the "drinking" establishments for the GI's to talk and dance and buy the "ladies" siggon tea. These places became so unruly that a sentry K-9 and handler had to be taken off the perimeter to patrol and maintain order. Nothing quiets a bar like a vicious police dog.

Earlier in this journal I wrote we were supplied with an abundance of ammo. It was not until 25 years later that I found out the reason we had so much ammo to practice firing with was that NCO's took a 6x6 truck to the ammo dump in Siagon and "moon-light requested" truck loads. There is nothing that can supply a unit with items it needs better than a NCO scrounger.

Many of our troops used their off-duty time to provide security to our Wing medical unit when they went into nearby villages and to a nearby leper colony to provide medical treatment for the Vietnamese civilian population.

The section within the squadron that faced the most danger night after night was the sentry dog section. They patrolled the edge of the perimeter. Needless to say the handlers became closer to their dog than many of their own family. We had more handlers stay for an additional tour than in any other section. Several dogs were killed when it became necessary for the handler to release his dog on the enemy. All VIP visitors were taken on a tour of the kennel area and the handlers put their dogs through their paces for the VIP's. Each VIP performance ended with a handler bringing his dog in front of the VIP's and saying to his dog, "What do you think of Officers?". The dog would raise his leg and pee.

Disclaimer: At my age especially after 30 years my memory is lacking. I apologize or missed dates, times, name and places.

In Retrospect

Looking back on my tour in V.N. it was a time of great comradeship, excitement, attention to duty and everyone pulling together to insure the mission was successful.

There were many high and low times. It was a great hurt to all personnel when a squadron comrade lost his life, but we all carried on to protect the resources and personnel in our charge. The morale of all squadron members was outstanding. Discipline was of the highest order and I do not recall even an article 15 being administered.

The leadership of the Junior Officers and NCO's was of the highest caliber and bravery of the airmen in the face of the enemy was outstanding.

Out numbered and out gunned was just one additional obstacle to be overcome.

The 3rd Security Police Squadron received the A.F. Outstanding Unit Award with V (valor); an award that all squadron members richly deserved and earned.