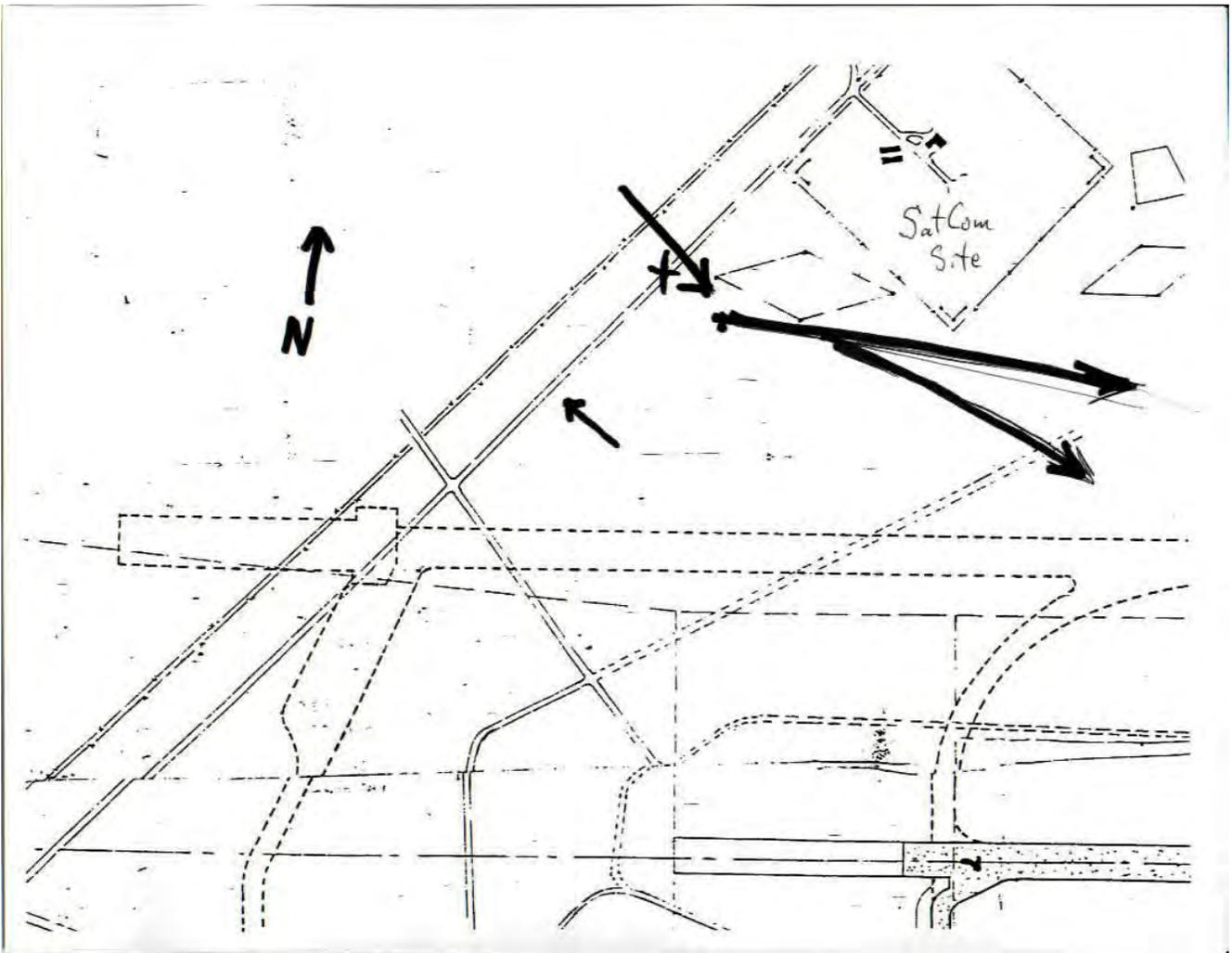




**The words imprinted on the photograph says it all.**



**A portion of Tan Son Nhut map, showing the northwest corner of the base.**

**It show the approximate route the enemy took to come onto base.**

**Then split into two groups.**

**One group headed for the bomb dump.**

**Once group headed for the flightline.**



**One of the medivac aircraft is about to receive the medical transportation bus.**

**It will take the severely wounded personnel to Japan or Germany for addition medical treatment.**



**Closer view of the medivac aircraft.**

## Man's Best Friend

In the face of overwhelmingly superior U.S. military strength, Communist commanders in Vietnam now appear ready to concede that they have begun to alter their tactics. From Hanoi came a recent report that Gen. Nguyen Chi Thanh, chief political commissar of the North Vietnamese Army, had made an appeal for greater battlefield "flexibility." To meet the U.S. challenge, declared Thanh, it is necessary to forget "the experiences of foreign countries . . ." or "formulas that exist in books" and, instead, rely on any tactic that works.

If, as seems likely, Thanh's message was aimed at encouraging Communist forces to place increasing emphasis on small-scale guerrilla operations, it was promptly reflected in South Vietnam last week. While main-force enemy units stayed safely out of sight, the Viet Cong struck in a series of scattered raids. Terrorists in Saigon gunned down Tran Van Van, one of South Vietnam's most prominent politicians, and bombed two U.S. billets—one in the capital and the other in the Mekong Delta town of Can Tho—wounding a total of ten Americans. And in a daring night assault, a band of guerrillas succeeded for the first time in penetrating the defenses of the sprawling Tan Son Nhut airport on the outskirts of Saigon.

The attack, reported NEWSWEEK's François Sully, might easily have turned into a major disaster if it had not been for a handful of U.S. air policemen and their highly trained German shepherd sentry dogs. Slipping past the minefield surrounding the base and South Vietnamese guards in the watchtowers, the Viet Cong raiders crept through high elephant grass to a position a mile inside the airfield. There they noiselessly set up rocket launchers, two recoilless rifles and a mortar.

Shortly after 1 a.m., the airbase's central security control office picked up a call from an American sentry. "My dog has a strong scent . . . They are all over the area . . . They are coming after me." Then, silence. (The sentry and his dog were later found dead, both riddled with Viet Cong bullets.)

**Alert:** The warning, however, had been sounded and sentries all over the base were quickly put on alert. From behind his sandbagged sentry post, Alvin Curie of Grand Rapids, Mich., spotted a group of Viet Cong dashing toward jet airplanes and helicopters parked in U-shaped revetments. Some of the guerrillas began to lob grenades and satchel charges at the planes. Unleashing his machine gun, Curie felled thirteen of the attackers.

In another part of Tan Son Nhut, meanwhile, air policeman Tommy C.

Newsweek, December 19, 1966

Poole, of Charlotte, N.C., followed his German shepherd, who had picked up a suspicious scent, to a large bush. As the dog, Nemo by name, growled and bared his teeth, the Viet Cong opened up with their automatic weapons. Though Nemo was badly wounded, both he and his handler remained on duty to guide a team of air policemen in a sweep of the airfield's perimeter.

By 4 a.m., the attack had been broken up. All told, 28 Viet Cong were killed. Though three U.S. air policemen lost their lives, Lt. Col. Grove C. Johnson, the grizzled Nebraskan who commands the air police, believed the affair could have turned out worse. Said Johnson: "Our casualties would have been greater without the dogs."

In the aftermath of the raid on Tan Son Nhut and the other attacks in Sai-



Newsweek—François Sully

Sentry and dog: A near disaster

gon, Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge declared: "There isn't any way to protect yourself against the . . . terrorist." But the U.S. military command was reportedly making plans to tighten the capital's security by stationing entire battalions of U.S. troops in the area. That, of course, means fewer troops for fighting elsewhere in South Vietnam—which just might have been what the Viet Cong had in mind all along.



**A HERO RETURNS**—San Bernardino, Calif.—Nemo, an Air Force sentry dog who alerted his unit to a Viet Cong attack—and lost an eye in the battle—returns to the U.S. with his handler, A3C Leonard Bryant. The dog, enroute to Lackland AFB, San Antonio, will be retired with the Purple Heart and a unit citation. (AP Wirephoto)

**On 29 May 1967 at 0900 hours, Lt General William W. Momyer, Commander, 7th Air Force presented the USAF Outstanding Unit Award to the 377th Security Police Squadron (until 15 May 1967 known as the 377th Air Police Squadron) at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam.**

**The presentation ceremony was held in front of Base Operations. The formation was made up from officers, airmen and K-9's who fought gallantly in defense of the base against a strong force of the Viet Cong on 4 and 5 December 1966.**



**The words inprinted on the photograph tells it accurately.**

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE AIR FORCE OUTSTANDING UNIT AWARD  
TO THE  
377TH AIR POLICE SQUADRON

The 377th Air Police Squadron, Pacific Air Forces, distinguished itself by exceptionally meritorious service in support of military operations involving conflict with an opposing armed force on 4 and 5 December 1966. On these dates, the personnel of the 377th Air Police Squadron displayed extreme heroic valor against a Viet Cong infiltration force and the highest degree of professionalism in defense of Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, during a mortar attack on the base. The singularly distinctive accomplishments of the members of the 377th Air Police Squadron reflect great credit upon themselves and the United States Air Force.



**The USAF Outstanding Unit Award, 377<sup>th</sup> Air Police Squadron**

FROM: Department of the Air Force  
377th Security Police Squadron (SPASCAP)  
APO San Francisco 96307

REPLY TO ATTN OF: SPSC

15 JUN 1967

SUBJECT: Presentation of the USAF Outstanding Unit Award

TO: Captain William C. Henry, FV3108044  
3750 Air Base Group  
Sheppard AFB, Texas 76311

1. On 29 May 1967 at 0900 Lt General Nomyer, Commander, 7th Air Force presented the USAF Outstanding Unit Award to the 377th Security Police Squadron (until 15 May 1967 known as the 377th Air Police Squadron) at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam. The presentation ceremony was held in front of Base Operations. The formation was made up from officers, airmen, and K-9s who fought gallantly in defense of the base against a strong force of the Viet Cong on 4 and 5 December 1966.

2. The official order awarding this decoration is paragraph 2, S.O. GB-116, dated 31 March 1967, Headquarters Department of the Air Force, Washington.

3. Listed below are items surrounding the attack that are considered to be especially significant:

a. It is the only known incident when an Air Force Unit engaged and successfully defeated an organized enemy force in ground combat action.

b. It is the only known incident where the Air Force Security Police were the only US elements to engage the enemy on the ground, with the assistance of air support from the US Army.

c. It is the only known incident in Vietnam where combat involving air base defense continued for two days.

4. Also noteworthy are the following:

a. Fire discipline. In spite of more than 6000 rounds expended during the hours of darkness, there were no major or minor injuries resulting from friendly fire.

b. More than sixty percent of the unit had been in-country less than 60 days, arriving from almost every USAF base in the US.

c. The base was closed only for a brief period then opened to all including civilian air carriers, although small arms fire continued within 200 yards of the active runway.

5. Since you were a member of our unit you share with each of us the singularly distinctive accomplishments resulting in receipt of this Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

GROVE C. JOHNSON, Lt Colonel, USAF  
Commander

1 Atch  
Unit Citation

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS SEVENTH AIR FORCE (PACAF)  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96307

SPECIAL ORDER  
G-117

21 January 1967

1. DP, each of the following is awarded the Bronze Star Medal with "V" device for heroism while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force on 4 and 5 December 1966.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM C HENRY, FV3108044 (377th CSG)

CAPTAIN FRED W HOVER, FV3116738 (377th CSG)

2. DP, LIEUTENANT COLONEL GROVE C JOHNSON, FR8727 (377th CSG) is awarded the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious achievement while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force on 4 and 5 December 1966.

3. DP, each of the following is awarded the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against and opposing armed force during the period indicated:

MASTER SERGEANT EDWARD W COLBURN, AF11180022 (377th CSG)  
8 January 1966 to 25 November 1966

MASTER SERGEANT ELMER L LEONARD JR, AF13309226 (14th ACW)  
1 February 1966 to 21 January 1967

TECHNICAL SERGEANT JAMES W DAUGHERTY, AF16395730 (460th TRW)  
28 March 1966 to 1 January 1967

TECHNICAL SERGEANT RICHARD K DAVIS, AF28718658 (7AF)  
28 January 1966 to 18 January 1967

TECHNICAL SERGEANT DAVID L EDWARDS, AF17204232 (7AF)  
1 March 1966 to 21 January 1967

TECHNICAL SERGEANT FRED ELMORE, AF25137522 (366th TFW)  
15 March 1966 to 8 January 1967

TECHNICAL SERGEANT JAMES E HEFFERN, AF17346935 (315th ACW)  
5 January 1966 to 18 December 1966

TECHNICAL SERGEANT FREDERICK C HERLACHER, AF13373381 (315th ACW)  
5 February 1966 to 15 December 1966

TECHNICAL SERGEANT RONALD W MAGNUSON, AF16468771 (366th CSG)  
14 January 1966 to 4 January 1967

TECHNICAL SERGEANT BERNARD R MERCIER, AF16293737 (315th ACW)  
9 April 1966 to 21 January 1967

G-117

**The above letter is from Lt Col Grove C. Johnson, Commander, 377<sup>th</sup> SPS.**



**Tan Son Nhut buildings 108 and 109, both are BOQ's.**



**Quan Cahn arm patch, Tan Son Nhut 1966-1967**



**Formal dress name plate 1966**

**All the air policemen were proud to wear the “Crossed Pistol patch.”**