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



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12 JAN 1967

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: IGS

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Actions Report, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, 4
December 1966, RCS: MACV J3-32

TO: MACV (MACJ 321)

1. Subject report is transmitted pursuant to paragraph 6b, MACVD 335-8.
2. This letter contains no classified information.

FOR THE COMMANDER

Francis E. Wilkie

FRANCIS E. WILKIE, Lt Colonel, USAF
Director of Security Police

1 Atch
377 Cmbt Spt Gp (BSL) Ltr,
25 Dec 66, same subj, (S),
1 cy; w/6 Atchs: Atchs 1,
2, and 3 (C), 1 cy of ea;
Atch 4 (U); Atch 5: Diagram
(S), 1 cy; Atch 6: (U)
Cy #1

Cy to: MACJ2 (w/Cy #2 of Atch)
MACT (w/Cy #3 of Atch)
AFGP (w/Cy #4 of Atch)
7AF (DOA) (w/Cy #5 of Atch)

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 377TH COMBAT SUPPORT GROUP (PACAF)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96307



REPLY TO
ATTN OF: BSL (3141)

25 December 1966

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Actions Report, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, 4
December 1966, RCS: MACV J3-32 (U)

TO: Commander
U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
Attn: J343
APO San Francisco 96243

THRU: 7AF (IGSL)

1. (U) Name or Identity and/or Type of Operation: Combined mortar and sapper penetration attack against Tan Son Nhut Air Base.
2. (U) Dates of Operation: Time of mortar attack with accompanying penetration by assault unit: 0105-0315, 4 December 1966; search-and-destroy and counter-action continued until 1340, 5 December 1966.
3. (U) Location: Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon, Capital Military District, RVN.
4. (U) Control or Command Headquarters: Headquarters, Seventh Air Force (PACAF).
5. (U) Reporting Officer:

<u>Commander</u>	<u>Unit</u>
Colonel Grover K. Coe	377th Combat Support Group, TSN AB
Colonel James W. Graham	Special Troups, USARV, TSN AB
Colonel Joe B. Stocker	11th Avn Bn, Lia Khe AB
Colonel Robert W. Wood	Capital Avn Bn, TSN AB
Lt Col R. E. Gibson	4th ACS, Nha Trang AB
Lt Col Grove C. Johnson	377th Air Police Sq, TSN AB

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Lt Col Hugh H. Riddle	Provost Marshal, HAC, Saigon
Major Huynh Minh Bon	33rd Group (VNAF) TSN AB
Capt Vo Van Khoa	83rd Special Gp (VNAF) TSN AB
Capt Vo Ngoc Su	53rd Regional Forces Bn (ARVN) TSN AB
Capt Ngo Van Trieu	2nd Service Bn (ARVN) TSN AB

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6. (C)(GP-4) Task Organizations:

a. 377th Air Police Squadron (PACAF)

(1) At approximately 2045 hours, 3 December 1966, maximum day-to-day security posture was reached with the posting of the 2000-0400 hours security flight. This was a force of 318 Air Policemen, consisting of 220 stationary/walking posts, 48 sentry-dog posts, 5 three-man primary Security Alert Teams (SATS), 5 three-man secondary SATS, 1 thirteen-man Quick Reaction Force (QRF), and CSC personnel including the Duty Officer and Flight Commander. In addition, Law Enforcement Section had reached its normal daily 1930-0330 hours posture of 25 one-man stationary/walking posts, 6 two-man patrols, and supervisory personnel for a total of 43. A total of 361 Air Police personnel were in a duty status at the time of the attack.

(2) The combined manning of Security and Law Enforcement sections at the time of the attack constituted 50% of the squadron present for duty strength. On 3-4 December 1966 the squadron was manned to 96% of its authorized strength and 98% of the assigned strength was present for duty; approximately 42% or 309 Air Policemen were available for emergency security duty. (q)

(3) A significant factor not reflected in this strength recapitulation is that 49% of the assigned strength had been in RVN less than sixty days. Thirty-five percent, including key senior NCO's, had been in RVN thirty days or less. (q)

b. Special Troops, USARV

(1) By 0240 all five platoons (30 men each) of the U.S. Army Quick Reaction Force (TF-35), Special Troops, USARV, had reported to their assembly point where they came under the operational control of Central Security Control (Joint US Command Post). This response was automatic and in accordance with Joint US Forces Defense Plan 1-66.

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Two platoons were dispatched to the Old Bomb Dump area where they took up defensive positions, one platoon remained in the assembly area as a reserve QRF and as security for the new POL tank farm. The remaining two platoons were deployed along a line west of and perpendicular to the 07/25 runway as a blocking force. Task Force 35 made light contact with VC flushed out of hiding by Air Police, but did not directly engage the enemy during this operation. It should be emphasized however, that without the support of TF-35 the capability of the Air Police to concentrate their principal effort upon the destruction of known enemy forces would have been gravely impaired.

7. (C)(GP-4) Supporting Forces:

a. US Air Force

(1) Detachment 4, 4th Air Commando Squadron, Bien Hoa Air Base, RVN. This detachment was on the scene in AC-47 Dragon ships within fifteen minutes of the attack. Flare ships ("Spooky") 41, 42, and 43 dropped a total of 490 flares from 0120 to 0650. No ordnance was expended. Again on 5 December 1966 this unit dropped a total of 196 flares from 0030 to 0635. (o)

b. US Army

(1) Capital Aviation Battalion, Tan Son Nhut, RVN. The 120th Aviation Company of the parent battalion rendered immediate support with two UH-1B assault helicopter teams, each team consisting of two ships. The initial alert team was airborne in two minutes and moved toward suspected off-base VC mortar positions and their support base. This team was subsequently joined by the second team from the 120th Aviation Company and one team (Crossbow 36) from the 173rd Aviation Company, 11th Battalion, Lai Khe, RVN. These teams destroyed one building and damaged two adjacent buildings which the VC were using for shelter and destroyed one mortar position and two automatic weapons positions in the vicinity of coordinates XS 787.958. (See Atch 3). No body count was made on the scene. (SOURCE: G-2 Capital Military District.) One team provided on-call support to Air Police forces engaged on the west perimeter. This consisted of sweeping with automatic weapons fire the external area immediately adjacent to the entire western perimeter to harass and/or destroy VC attempting to enter/exit the base. These three teams also supported the Fifty-Third Regional Forces Battalion and the 30th Ranger Battalion (ARVN). (e)

(a) These three teams flew a total of 15:15 hours, expended 1600 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition, 303 rounds of 2.75 rockets, and 1000 rounds of 40mm. (r)

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EX-107
EX-108
EX-109
EX-110
EX-111
EX-112
EX-113
EX-114
EX-115
EX-116
EX-117
EX-118
EX-119
EX-120

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(2) At 0121 the Air Police Desk Sergeant notified the 716th Military Police Battalion (Saigon) that Tan Son Nhut Air Base was under mortar and ground attack. Military Police patrols in the vicinity of the airbase were immediately reinforced by the dispatch of eight additional two man patrols and road blocks/check points were established on all avenues of approach to the air base. At 0137 a Military Police alert force (26 men) took up defensive positions on the southern perimeter of the base in the area of the main gate.

c. Republic of Vietnam Air Force:

(1) The 83rd Special Group, VNAF, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN. This group scrambled two AlH's, code name "Falcon Red", at 0137 on 4 December to assault the VC mortar position west of the base at XS 787.958. This team expended all ordnance on the suspected mortar position and huts near a factory complex being used by the VC as a sanctuary and aid station previously referred to in paragraph 7b(1), above. The team returned to base at 0330 hours.

(2) 33rd Group, VNAF, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN. This group responded rapidly to provide flare illumination for ground forces outside the base and for the Air Police force inside the base. C-47 aircraft Bravo, Charlie, and Delta dropped a total of 273 flares from 0105 until 0630, 4 December 1966. On the evening of 4 December and the early morning hours of 5 December, Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta C-47 aircraft dropped a total of 423 flares between 0145 and 0630. (o)

(3) 33rd Wing, VNAF, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN. The 33rd Wing possesses six (6) light tanks and a number of heavy military trucks which mount either twin 20mm cannon or Cal. .50 machine guns. The tanks are all located in fixed positions in the flight line area, and were not observed to take any actions contributory to base defense during the period of 4-6 December 1966. The large armed trucks normally carry a crew of three (3) VNAF personnel, and nightly patrol the outer perimeter roads or park with their guns covering approaches to the perimeter. During the early portion of the initial attack on 4 December 1966, two such trucks (each equipped with twin 20mm cannon) were patrolling the west perimeter road from 051 gate to 055 gate. These trucks were observed several times firing at random into dark areas in which no movement was reported or observed by Air Police in the vicinity. Some of these areas contained Air Police patrols. During the firefight between Air Police and VC forces on the west perimeter road, at 0235 hours, 4 December 1966, one of these trucks was caught on the edge of the VC attack and sustained minor small arms damage which apparently stopped the engine. All three VNAF crewmen abandoned the vehicle in the middle of the road and fled, leaving behind all their equipment including small arms. The second truck was

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also in the area at the start of the engagement, moving north, and accelerated rapidly as the first shots were exchanged. On three separate occasions this vehicle almost collided with a jeep containing two Air Police officers as it twice reversed direction before finally taking up a position in the middle of the road facing away from the fire-fight in progress farther south on the same road. The gunner manned his weapons, bringing them to bear on positions occupied by Air Police approximately 250-300 meters away. Seeing this, one of the Air Police officers ran to the gun truck and shouted to the gunner not to fire. When the officer indicated that the guns were trained on Air Police positions the three-man crew abandoned their vehicle and fled. In doing so, one crewman snatched an automatic weapon from the bed of the truck, discharging it in the process and narrowly missing the Air Police officer by a few feet. The crew member immediately dropped the weapon and fled. This gun-truck with the other disabled vehicle, remained abandoned until approximately first light after 0630 hours. (Q)

d. Republic of Vietnam Army:

(1) 53rd Regional Forces Battalion, ARVN. This unit dispatched a quick reaction force of approximately twenty men to the previously mentioned factory area to engage the VC and neutralize the mortar positions. While enroute this team was ambushed at approximately 0130 in the vicinity of XS 789, 963. Elements reached the factory area at approximately 0200, made contact with VC and requested reinforcements from Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area. (e)

(2) 2nd Service Battalion, ARVN, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN. The 2nd Company of this battalion is responsible for defense of the west perimeter fence line of the air base. In addition to manning the twelve concrete bunkers which are on a line parallel with and adjacent to the west perimeter fence line, their personnel man the 051 and 055 gates, the former located at the south end of the west perimeter road, and the latter at the north end of the west perimeter road. The bunker closest to the VC point of penetration of the perimeter fence is located approximately 325 meters north of the 051 gate and 120 meters south of the point of penetration. The inability of the ARVN bunker guards to detect the VC force is attributed to the tall, dense vegetation in the area, darkness, and the fact that the penetration was carried out in a disciplined and orderly fashion calculated to reduce detection by ARVN/US personnel.

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(a) Subsequent to the initial penetration, a fire fight involving small arms, machine guns, and hand grenades broke out in this same location between the VC force and the Air Police. The perimeter road was the point of demarcation between the two opposing forces with the VC force closer to the ARVN guard tower. During this fire fight ARVN personnel in the bunker failed to fire at the enemy, although they had a clear field of fire and were well within effective range (120 meters). This is the fire fight in which two Air Policemen were killed in action. (See Atch 2) (b-2)

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(b) 3rd Company, 2nd Service Battalion. This company has responsibility for external defense of the western side of Tan Son Nhut Air Base. At 0205, 4 December, this company deployed outside the west perimeter as a blocking force to prevent entry or exit by an enemy force, and at 0315 this battalion sent reinforcements to the referenced factory/mortar emplacement area to aid elements of the 53rd Battalion. At 0520 this unit began a sweep operation in their exterior area of responsibility, while Air Police formed a blocking force in the interior adjacent to the perimeter. (5) (NOTE: Information on the deployment of the 3rd Company was obtained from the US Army Advisors to that unit. The actual activities of this company are in doubt, for the following reasons: If the company deployed as described at 0205, they should have encountered the VC who engaged the Air Police at the west perimeter shortly thereafter; if the company was outside the perimeter shortly after 0205, it is unlikely that TSN Sensitive Area would have approved the UH-1B strafing of the area which followed, and there were no reported casualties among the 3rd Company.)

53rd asked for help at 0200 sent at 0315

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8. (C) (Gp-4) Intelligence: Intelligence gained through interrogation of two VC prisoners captured during the 4 December attack on Tan Son Nhut Air Base disclosed the following: The VC units engaged in the assault against Tan Son Nhut consisted of the 1st and 2nd Platoons, 1st Company, 6th Battalion, 165th Regt., with a strength of 36 and 30 respectively. The battalion carried the designation of "V6", which is thought to be a cover name and a "SAPPER" unit. Platoons were equipped as follows: 1st Platoon: One 60mm Mortar with approximately six rounds of ammo. Two B-40 Anti-tank grenades (Chicom type 56, USSR Model RPG-2) with approximately eight rounds of ammunition. A number of AK submachine guns and carbines. A number of mines, explosives, and grenades. (g-2) 2nd Platoon: Four B-40's and approximately twelve rounds of ammunition. Two M-79 grenade launchers and thirty-six rounds of ammunition. A number of carbines and AK submachine guns. One CKC rifle. A number of BANGALORE torpedoes, mines, explosives and grenades. (g-2)

(a) Both platoons assembled at the road junction of LY VAN MANH, approximately eighteen kilometers from Tan Son Nhut Air Base, on 2 December. At 1900 the 1st Platoon left the shelter area of LY VAN MANH and moved out to VINH LOC (XS 700. 970) arriving there at approximately 2100. At 1900 on 3 December the 2nd Platoon left LY VAN MANH, arriving at VINH LOC at approximately 2110. Both Platoons then moved out toward their objective at Tan Son Nhut, maintaining a separation distance of 100 meters. (See Atch 3) (g-2)

(b) The 1st Platoon was to be the reserve, while the 2nd Platoon penetrated and assaulted the air base for a fifteen minute period, withdrawing immediately thereafter. The 2nd Platoon penetrated the west perimeter of the base by cutting their way through three successive barbed wire fences and, apparently contrary to plan, was followed by an unknown

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number of the 1st Platoon. The escape route was to be the same as the entry route.

c. An additional Platoon evidently was responsible for the off-base mortar position. One VC captured by the 53rd RF Bn stated that he was a member of the 3rd Company, 2nd Battalion, 165th VC Regiment. (e)

d.) In the month preceeding the attack there was no significant increase in intelligence reports received by the security force, quantitative and qualitative factors remaining static. The credibility of the majority of intelligence reports received was quite low, either because they were not rated or the rating assigned by the evaluating unit placed the intelligence in the "rumor" category. An intelligence report on what was probably the mortar force was furnished the security forces at 1730, 3 December, by the Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area, but no rating was assigned to this information. The message originated from an undisclosed source in Gia Dinh Province and was transmitted to intelligence officials through Go Vap. The source reported there was reason to believe that the 1st Company, 2nd Battalion, had moved into hamlets of Thong Tay Hoy village, and that its mission was to attack Tan Son Nhut on the night of 3-4 December 1966. (d-1) Thong Tay Hoy is located approximately ten ~~kilometers~~ west of the base. (NOTE: The Vietnamese Air Force Office of Investigation reports that the attack platoons stopped at and stayed in the Tan Hoa village on 3 December, while the Combined Military Interrogation Center reports that on 3 December the two platoons stopped to rest at the Vinh Loc area. This information is not contradictory as Tan Hoa village is in the Vinh Loc area).

e. Weather Conditions: On the night of 3-4 December, the weather was dry. Wind was from the south at five knots, and cloud cover was scattered at 5000 feet and broken at 15000. Visibility was seven miles. The moon was in its last quarters, rising at 2334 on 3 December and setting on 4 December at 1229. First light on 4 December occurred at 0634 and sun rose at 0657. (j) The cloud condition and the minimum of moonlight afforded excellent concealment for a penetration force. The south-to-north direction of the wind on the morning of 4 December was a limiting factor, hampering early detection of the penetrators by sentry dogs. The VC assault force route of entry and travel was west to east. Only those sentry-dogs immediately to the north of the entry route could detect the penetrators and alert to them. Unfortunately, populated areas and adverse terrain features downwind (north) from the VC force created a distance factor exceeding the dog's sensory capabilities, and teams were unable to make sensory detection of the penetrators. The VC managed to remain downwind from the sentry dog teams patrolling south of the populated area, (Ba Queo Receiver Site), thus precluding olfactory

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alerts by those teams as well. The heavy growth of grass and shrubbery in the area penetrated by the VC was another factor seriously limiting the detection capability of the dogs, as the vegetation prevented the spread of scent on the slow moving breeze. All detection of Viet Cong within sentry dog areas of responsibility on the morning of 4 December was made by visual observations of the handlers, rather than by dog alerts. Conversely, on the evening of 4 December, sentry dogs were highly effective in detecting the presence of VC in several areas. This effectiveness is attributed to the fact that VC on the west side of the base were stationary (in hiding) or moving at a slow, cautious pace toward the west perimeter, while sentry dog teams were moving about their areas of responsibility in each of the four compass directions.

f. Terrain Features: The terrain traversed by the VC penetration force from the point of entry is overgrown by dense vegetation and includes large areas of construction site preparation, predominately earth moving and excavation for a new runway and drainage system. For the initial 750 meters their route was through thick, tall grass and bushes. The remaining portion of their route to the active runway was through a construction zone, intersected by drainage canals (10m x 6m) and high mounds of earth (7m x 4m). These features afforded the enemy excellent cover and concealment while approaching the runway. From the new runway construction area to the Mail Line of Resistance the terrain is devoid of obstacles, although the grass between the south side of the 07/25 runway and the MLR concertina barrier is sufficiently tall to offer concealment under the illumination conditions then prevailing.

9. (U) Mission: Omitted IAW MACVD 335-8/7AF Sup 1, para 9.

10. (U) Concept of Operation: Omitted IAW MACVD 335-8/7AF Sup 1, para 10.

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11. (S) (Gp-3). Execution:

a. Phase I - 0110 - 1000, 4 December 1966.

(1) The initial alarm that VC had penetrated the base came via radio at 0110 when the sentry dog handler on post Alpha K-19, an area immediately to the north of the 07/25 runway, advised Central Security Control (CSC) that unidentified individuals were on the north side of his post. The Alpha Sector Primary SAT was dispatched to AK-19 to investigate the report and support the sentry dog team. Explosions and small arms fire began immediately after this, and CSC ordered execution of 377th Air Police Squadron Regulation 207-4, "Security Rapid Reaction Plan". (See paragraph 6d, above). (b-1) Almost simultaneously, at 0114, post Delta 15, an MLR bunker, reported that VC were coming through the Delta Sector MLR and that after firing at this group his weapon had jammed. This element of the Viet Cong assault force, estimated to number eight or nine, entered Taxi-way West-7 (W-7) from between concrete revetments No. 7 and No. 8, which contained RF-101 aircraft. (b-1) Concurrently, with the penetration of the MLR at Delta 15, another group consisting of at least thirteen VC crossed the 07/25 runway and attempted to proceed to the aircraft parking area via taxiway West Five (W-5). This latter element moved into the field of fire of post Delta 11, one of two M-60 machine gun bunkers on the Delta Sector MLR. The machine-gunner posted at Delta 11 is credited with nine VC dead, and two Air Policemen with him in that bunker, firing M-16s, are credited with killing the remaining four, three of whom attempted to out-flank the bunker and silence it from the rear (See Atch 1). As no VC were encountered by guards directly behind Delta 11, and no VC were observed successfully passing this post, it is assumed that either the entire group of VC was killed, or that any survivors fled north before being sighted by the Air Policemen on the MLR. While proceeding toward the machine gun bunker, the VC fired at least two B-40 anti-tank grenades (Chicom type 56, USSR Model, RPG-2) at the concrete revetments. One was fired perpendicular to revetment number 10, and the other was fired at an angle at revetment number 9. Neither grenade penetrated the full thickness of the concrete, but each penetrated 1 meter into the cement.

(2) Reconstruction of VC activity in the aircraft parking area by interviewing witnesses and by surveying the scene suggests that no member of the assault element succeeded in passing post Delta 11 at West Five taxiway. The group which penetrated the MLR breached the concertina wire by cutting a strand in the bottom tier, separating the coils with their hands, and crawling through. After passing between Revetments

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No. 7 and 8 they stopped beside a pick-up truck which they used as cover while surveying the area. All except one continued south into the C-47 and helicopter parking area. At this time CSC was informed that VC were in the C-47/helicopter area and that Air Policemen posted as close-in security guards were firing on them. An MD-3 power unit parked adjacent to an RF-101C in revetment Number 7 exploded in flame and the fire soon engulfed a major portion of the aircraft. It was initially assumed that this revetment had sustained a direct hit by a mortar; subsequent investigation, however, indicates that the explosion was in all probability caused by a grenade. One or more Viet Cong with this group raked a 180-degree area with automatic weapon fire while tossing handgrenades into the C-47/helicopter parking area. There were several large explosions at this time as fuel cells on one helicopter erupted; and grenades or 60mm mortar shells found other aircraft targets. The one VC who broke off from the main body proceeded south-west, down taxiway W-7, tossing handgrenades into unoccupied sand-bag personnel shelters. Before he could grenade an occupied bunker, the VC was killed by an Air Policeman armed with a shotgun.

*They reached
the VNAF/AC*

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(a) VC within the C-47/helicopter ramp-area halted their eastward movement several meters west of the ARMCO RF-4C revetments, hesitated, and then withdrew, retracing their entry route at 0140. Their hesitation may have been due to the heavy fire they were drawing at the time, and the resistance they would have to overcome to gain entry into the revetments. One Air Policeman at this location was firing tracer rounds from his M-16 which the VC may have mistaken for a machine gun.

(3) Throughout this time explosions were occurring sporadically within areas in which USAF helicopters, C-47s and USN aircraft were parked. The Counter-Mortar Radar Unit (CMR) reported at 0115 to TSN/SA a mortar position firing toward the base from XS 8185/98580, a location approximately 150 meters north-west of the 055 gate. An ARVN 105mm Howitzer positioned on Tan Son Nhut fired twenty-one rounds at this location. At 0315 the CMR unit plotted a mortar location at XS 791.985, approximately 100 meters north of the Vinatexco Textile Mill west of the base. (4) Assault helicopters of the 120th Aviation Battalion and VNAF A-1Hs were directed to this target. Elements of the 53rd RF Bn were enroute to the area when they were ambushed by the VC in the vicinity of coordinate XS 787/963 where two men were KIA and the reaction force scattered. The US Army Advisor to this unit reported to TSN/SA that while enroute to the factory location this force had been pursued by VC. Elements of the 53rd Bn did reach the factory area by 0200. (e)

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(4) On Tan Son Nhut, a number of fire-fights occurred between Air Police and elements of the VC force. Alpha Sector Primary SAT, which had responded to Alpha K-19's distress call (paragraph 10a(1), above), notified CSC at 0118 that his vehicle (M-151 jeep) had been hit by a mortar or grenade, and that he was wounded. (NOTE: Later investigation indicated that a tire of the vehicle had been struck by a fragment from an anti-tank grenade. However, the tail fin assembly of a Chicom 60mm mortar round was later found in this area, but in such a position that it could not have been the missile which struck the jeep. This was one of several mortar rounds fired at the deployed SAT by the mortar position on the west side of AK-15.) At 0140 Alpha Post K-33 reported that he was in the ditch on his post, that there were VC in the ditch, and he was pursuing them. At this point the pattern of alarms raised by sentry dog handlers who had made visual sightings of VC, indicated the retreat route taken by the VC withdrawing from the aircraft parking area. A blocking force of approximately 50 Air Policemen was deployed along the perimeter road which connects the 051 gate to the west ramp. A second force of approximately 50 Air Policemen was deployed facing north along the east-west inner perimeter road which runs east from the west perimeter road to the new runway construction area. A third force of approximately 100 Air Policemen, were deployed south-to-north along the west perimeter road from the inner perimeter road to a point 90 meters south of the Ba Queo Receiver Site. (See Atch 1) Shortly before the arrival of this third group, a jeep patrol posting personnel from south to north on this west perimeter road had stopped after posting the last man. At this time one VC darted out of the bushes from the south and ran for the perimeter fence. As he passed the jeep he dropped a concussion grenade at the feet of one Air Policeman who had dived in the ditch. No injuries were sustained by Air Police personnel.

(5) The third group of Air Policemen deployed on the west perimeter road was in place by 0210. Unknown to them at this time their position directly blocked the entry-escape route of the VC. Two 1 1/2 ton trucks and one 1/2 ton pick-up truck were located on the road in front of their position. About fifteen minutes after their arrival heavy fire from small arms, automatic weapons, rocket launchers, and hand grenades was directed against them from the west side of the road in the vicinity of the perimeter fence. This was the most intense fire encountered in the entire operation. Two Chicom anti-tank grenades hit the pick-up truck, demolishing it. The two 1 1/2 ton trucks were destroyed by grenades. Air Police forces maintained their positions and returned fire.

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(6) The fire-fight continued until approximately 0235 when VC fire subsided. Upon advancing in a search-and-destroy operation toward the enemy position, Air Policemen found the bodies of two Air Policemen, KIA, and two wounded Air Policemen were found on or adjacent to the road. Across the road, three dead VC were found, killed by small arms fire. (See Atch 2) One VC had a battery pack lying next to his body, suggesting the presence of a "Claymore" mine. Such a mine was found in the weeded area next to the road with the mine pointed diagonally across the road toward the Air Police positions. (See Atch 6) It is hypothesized that the "Claymore" was intended to cover the escape of the VC force in the event of pursuit but that the VC assigned to detonate the device was killed in the fire-fight before he could find and connect lead wires to the "Claymore". There is reason to believe that this group of VC (the 1st Platoon, 1st Co., 6th Bn.), a reserve force according to interrogation reports described in paragraph 8b, entered the base, and later withdrew through the gap cut in the triple perimeter fence by the 2nd Platoon. Later contacts with VC attempting to escape were concentrated near this gap, and indicate it was both penetration route and escape route for the 2nd Platoon. As the Air Police had arrived and deployed directly across the approach to this gap only 15 minutes earlier, at a time when the area was well illuminated by air-dropped flares, it seems likely that elements of the 1st Platoon, in reserve outside the fence, observed the movement of the Air Police. They then apparently passed through the gap and launched a concentrated attack in an effort to re-secure the escape route of the 2nd Platoon. Failing in this, they retreated through the gap and either re-deployed or dispersed to avoid capture. The likelihood that these VC observed the Air Police deploying severely limits the credibility of one theory that this action was an unintentional encounter with Air Police forces by a second, follow-on assault force. This observation is supported by the lack of satchel charges, blocks of explosives and similar munitions on bodies recovered from this action; whereas VC killed in the interior of the base were well supplied with demolition devices.

(7) While the engagement discussed above was in progress, action was continuing in other areas. At 0220 Alpha Post K-33 reported he was hit and wounded, but was pursuing the enemy. This sentry dog handler observed a six-man mortar squad near the west side of Alpha Post K-15. He testified later that he observed the mortar being fired toward the aircraft parking areas. When he proceeded to within 175 meters of the mortar position he took cover and began firing on the mortar crew. The enemy returned small arms fire, but ceased their activity. Despite sustaining a wound below his eye and through his ear, he maintained radio contact with CSC report-

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ing the enemy movements. The mortar team was last observed moving the mortar in a southerly direction toward the flight line where its second position, 350 meters north of the active runway, was identified later that morning. (See Atch 1 and 6) At this second location, five US 60mm mortar shells, two of which had been fused, along with a food tin, several empty 60mm mortar shipping casings, discarded increments and a few separate fuses, were found. (M-3) The base plate for this mortar was found and turned over to an Air Policeman by a civilian RMK worker, several days later. The identity of the civilian (an American) has not been established and the precise location of the plate when found is unknown, although it was several meters from the rest of the equipment. The tube itself was not recovered despite extensive searches by EOD and Air Police personnel.

(8) Alpha Post K-20, (area in which referenced mortar was located) advised CSC at 0305 that VC were on his post. He advised that he was receiving fire and requested an ambulance for a sentry dog supervisor who was wounded. This was the last transmission from this handler. He was found KIA at 0415 by the Alpha K-21 sentry dog handler. At 0350, the Air Policeman on Alpha K-21 encountered VC heading west on his post. He engaged them and released his dog, which was wounded by hostile fire. (b-3)

(9) It was apparent by this time (approximately 0400) that the VC were withdrawing from action in an attempt to escape. A number of minor exchanges continued to occur throughout the remainder of the night between VC and Air Police.

(10) The 120th Aviation Co. provided fire support for the 53rd (RF) Bn and the Air Police during this early morning period. One of their helicopters, "Razorback 35", strafed the west perimeter fence line to harrass any VC in that area, and fired into the area through which the 1st Platoon had retreated. The result of this fire is unknown. Other helicopter assault teams placed the mortar position behind the Vinatexco factory under heavy fire; and provided effective support fire for the 53rd RF Bn., which was engaged with VC force after the ambush of their convoy mentioned in paragraph 7d(1).

(11) The US Army Advisor to the 53rd RF Bn. later stated that the 53rd was in direct contact with the VC force from about 0200 to 0215. It was reported to TSN/SA later that morning that losses of this unit (53rd) were: 3 KIA, 4 WIA, four carbines and two M-1 rifles lost. In the course of the morning, the 2nd Service Bn was directed to assist the 53rd by TSN/SA. (5)

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(12) At 0400 hours all Air Police activities were placed in a static or "hold" status. This action was intended to prevent indiscriminate firing, to clear certain area, to accurately locate all friendly forces, and to allow key personnel to regroup and reorganize as deemed necessary. Throughout the engagement E. O. D. personnel had been working closely with the Air Police to strip dead VC of weapons and munitions, to pick up "dud" ordnance, to check suspected booby traps, etc. (m)

(13) Also at 0400 hours, E. O. D. teams began a systematic search of the flight line, aircraft and revetments. At 0445 hours the Law Enforcement Section made a comprehensive search of the cantonment area of the base. At the same time, E. O. D. made a search of all dining halls and the Airmen's, Officers', and N. C. O. Clubs. Each was found to be free of demolitions. Following this search, a thorough sweep was made of the runways, which were found to be safe. By daybreak the base was, for all practical purposes, fully operational apart from the west side where VC were known to be hiding among tombs, in old wells and in extremely dense undergrowth. The main runway (07/25) was opened at 0849 hours 4 December 1966 for normal aircraft operations. (k)

(14) Not previously mentioned in this narrative was the high-order detonation which occurred at approximately 0230 in the southernmost revetment of the Old Bomb Dump, located in the north central portion of the base. Quantities of US Navy five-inch shells stored in "conex" containers were destroyed. It was initially assumed that this ammunition bunker sustained a direct hit by mortar shells. Later investigation by E. O. D., however, indicated that a satchel charge with sufficient explosive capability to detonate the five inch shells was probably used. This analysis appears correct in light of later developments in this same area involving large VC satchel charges. (i-3) (See para 10c(3)).

(15) At 0530, there had been no contact with VC for approximately one hour. It was correctly assumed that any Viet Cong still on the installation would make an effort to escape before daylight, and thus expose their positions. Accordingly, Air Police forces were retained in their positions as in paragraphs 10a(4) and 10a(5), to cover the most probable escape routes. At 0625, with the approach of first light, Air Police personnel on the west perimeter road, near the entry point used by the VC to penetrate the perimeter, sighted several VC in the field south of their positions. The VC were moving north toward the Air Police blocking positions in an effort to reach the perimeter fence and escape. Air Police personnel immediately opened fire. The VC returned the fire



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seriously wounding one Air Policeman. A cover of small-arms fire was layed down by Air Police to permit the medical evacuation of the wounded. Upon cessation of the covering fire two of the VC in the field waved their hands above the weeds indicating their desire to surrender. Several Air Policemen moved into the field and surrounded the VC while others stood by to provide a cover fire in the event of a ruse. Both POWs were wounded and were released to VNAF authorities. A sweep of the field in which they were captured disclosed two dead VC. A short time later two VC surrendered to Air Police near the west end of the 07/25 runway. (b-4)

(16) While Air Police had no further contact with VC there was no assurance that all who had penetrated the base had been killed, captured or had escaped. A helicopter was requested to maintain aerial surveillance of the area, and upon arrival of a US Army UH-1 at 0810 hours, a search-and-destroy operation was initiated. A sweep was made with an Air Police line formed perpendicular to the west perimeter road, moving north from the 051 gate to the large drainage canal north of the Ba Queo Receiver Site. The line of this sweep extended eastward 500 meters from the west perimeter road. Small arms fire was encountered by the sweep force in the heavily overgrown area east of the Ba Queo Receiver Site, but the NCO on the scene broke off contact and halted the sweep due to uncertainty as to the origin of the fire and the possibility that he might direct fire on US Army personnel believed to be in the area. CSC could not immediately confirm the precise location of the Army personnel. When the sweep was resumed Air Police drew no further fire and found the area from which fire had come to be devoid of VC and US Army personnel. Renewed VC activity in the area of the sweep was to be encountered later that day, 4 December 1966; and all personnel involved in both morning and evening encounters are reasonably certain that the VC were in the area covered by the sweep at the time. Since they were able to completely conceal themselves despite a careful combing of the entire area in full daylight highlights the need to eliminate the almost unpenetrable cover afforded by the dense vegetation on this portion of the air base. Since they held their fire and allowed the Air Police to search around them free of harm illustrates convincingly the confidence the VC have in their ability to use available cover and concealment to best advantage.

(17) The search continued until approximately 0920 hours 4 December 1966, at which time the total security force reverted from emergency to normal security posture. Earlier, at daybreak, when it appeared that remaining VC elements had been contained, Air Police forces on the south side of the 07/25 runway were reduced to afford those Air Police scheduled to relieve the night shift an opportunity to eat and rest for several hours. Manning was still sufficient to secure

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resources in and around the aircraft parking area and to maintain observation of the suspected area of hidden VC.

b. Phase II - 1000 hours 4 Dec to 0630 hours 5 Dec 1966.

(1) After 0920 hours 4 December 1966, activity on Tan Son Nhut Air Base was normal until approximately 2021 hours when Alpha Post K-34 detected a VC crossing his post and opened fire. This sentry dog post had been the scene of much of the morning's activities, and one on which several VC had been killed or captured, as well as the center of the area swept after sunrise. The post also covered the entry-escape route. The combination of these factors, with a confirmed VC sighting at 2021, indicated the start of an attempt by the remaining VC to withdraw by their original route. Simultaneously, the Primary Quick Reaction Team (QRT) was dispatched to cover the escape route and the squadron Security Reaction Plan was implemented. Additional Quick Reaction Forces (QRF's) were formed rapidly and dispatched to pre-selected lines from which they could halt attempts at escape by the VC. Beginning at 2100 hours a search-and-destroy operation was organized to sweep the affected area which extended from the west perimeter road to the north to the new runway construction on the south and from the drainage canal on the east to the inner perimeter road on the west. (c-8) The VC entry-escape route ran through this area. At 2145 hours two VC were taken under fire and killed by Air Police QRF personnel moving southward. A third previously undetected VC opened fire and was also killed. A lull in flare illumination at this time caused a momentary loss of contact with the VC. When flares again lighted the area, the sweep was resumed and a fourth VC was sighted and killed. This latter VC fell forward still clasping a hand grenade from which the pin had been pulled. When his body was checked by EOD personnel, the grenade rolled from his hand, the handle released and the primer fuze activated. An EOD man immediately seized the grenade and threw it a safe distance away where it exploded.

(2) One hour later at 2245, and approximately 275 meters due south, another element of the sweep force searching a nearly impenetrable thicket detected a VC when it had approached to within 1 meter of his hiding place. Simultaneously the VC opened fire which was returned by Air Police killing the VC.

(3) At 0029 hours 5 December the sentry dog team posted on Alpha K-34 detected and fired on a VC moving through that post. The VC dove into a bush pursued by the sentry dog. A second sentry dog team moved into the bush and discovered three VC. The handler withdrew at this time and was shot three times in the shoulder before he had covered more than 5 meters. Small arms fire was heard from

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the bush and Alpha K-34's dog emerged wounded. Elements of the sweep force arrived at this time and a fire fight ensued. When, after several unsuccessful attempts, the wounded Air Policeman had been removed from the target area, three hand grenades were lobbed into the bush, killing the three VC who were concealed therein.

(4) The search operations continued with negative results until 0630 hours 5 December when they were terminated. A total of eight VC were killed in action and one Air Policeman was wounded in action. There is no doubt that the VC killed in this phase were survivors of the force that had penetrated the base perimeter in the early hours of 4 December. Their close proximity to the penetration route and the absence of any aggressive action unless detected clearly suggests that escape through the original entry point was their primary objective.

(5) One factor which at times seriously hampered conduct of this operation was the inadequacy of illumination. Because of the large number of Air Police committed and the nature of the terrain which is extremely rough, intersected by deep drainage canals and high mounds of earth and covered in extensive areas by dense growths of brush and elephant grass, adequate illumination was absolutely essential to identification of friendly forces and to detection of concealed VC. The moon on 5 December was in the last quarter when it rose at 0021 hours and thus afforded no assistance. Flare illumination was clearly required, and was requested of the 33rd Group, VNAF. Extreme difficulty was experienced in obtaining this requested support, perhaps due to a commitment of this unit to support ARVN operations off-base. Until C-47 flare ships of the 4th Air Commando Squadron, USAF, arrived over the base at 0030 hours, 95% of available illumination was provided by large quantities of M-127 illumination slap flares employed by the Air Police.

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(6) Equally serious and immediately detrimental to the conduct of the search-and-destroy operation was the interference of certain VNAF personnel with the established plan of operation. Despite the explicit instructions and prior objections of the Air Police officer on the scene, at 2220 hours, 5 December 1966, a contingent of VNAF personnel entered the area of the planned sweep in front of the Air Police lines. This obstructed the Air Police field of fire and prevented Air Police from continuing the operation which had already resulted in several firefights and five (5) VC KIA. At 2228 hours a second VNAF group also entered the search area in front of the Air Police positions. The presence of these groups halted all progress for approximately forty-five minutes. In addition, the actions of these two VNAF groups jeopardized the safety of Air Policemen around them for any contact

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or contact with them. The presence of these groups also resulted in the loss of the Air Police field of fire.

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between VNAF and VC forces would have brought fire on one element or another of the sweep force regardless of the direction of fire. Both VNAF groups proceeded to search the area for VC bodies, which they stripped of all equipment and personal belongings, collecting all discarded equipment and material they encountered. Quite apart from the interference with the Air Police operation, this activity on the part of the Vietnamese deprived US forces of the opportunity to gain intelligence information from enemy bodies or equipment. The loss of this intelligence data has proven to be of considerable importance, as indicated by direct communication between Air Police Officers and US intelligence agencies. This interference with the Air Police was the most serious of a number of similar actions by VNAF personnel. VC killed or captured by Air Police were consistently stripped of all identification and equipment, although no Vietnamese support was evident during the killing and capturing. In those cases where VC bodies may have been booby-trapped or were loaded with sensitive munitions, scavenging was delayed until after USAF EOD personnel had secured grenades and demolition charges, and cleared weapons near the bodies.

c. Phase III 0825 - 1030, 7 December 1966.

(1) With the termination of the Phase II search-and-destroy operation, a force of 130 Air Police was assembled to conduct a repeat search of the west area of the base, taking advantage of the daylight. This search continued from 0825 until 1153 without incident or contact with the enemy.

(2) At 1153 an Air Police observer posted on a 120 foot water tower located in the southwest portion of the base observed a VC moving south of the Old Bomb Dump area in the North Central part of the base. The sweep line was halted near this location and the primary Alpha SAT was dispatched to investigate. The observer directed the SAT to the VC position where he was located, engaged and killed. The search continued until 1340 without further contact or incident. Throughout the search all holes, gullies, culverts and bushes, were thoroughly checked. When a positive check was impractical or impossible, small arms fire and hand grenades were used to flush out possible VC.

(3) At approximately 1400, 6 December 1966, US Army personnel entered their assigned ammunition bunker at the most southern point in the Old Bomb Dump and discovered satchel charges against the side of a conex box containing high explosives. (See Atch 6) An EOD team responded and cleared the area, removing the satchel charge which consisted of two blocks of plastic explosives bound together and covered with a plastic covering. In addition, two wooden boxes of high explosives and 9 1/2 blocks of Composition 3, all US manufactured, were found

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secreted in the weeds adjacent to the same cone~~x~~ box. On 7 December at about 1030 a satchel charge was found in the next bunker to the northwest. In both instances the timer had not been set nor had the detonater been placed in the explosives. (9-3) The two revetments affected by these two findings of satchel charges are adjacent to the revetments blasted at 0230, 4 December 1966 (reference para 10a(14)).

(4) Analysis of these events suggest that at least one, three-man VC team broke off from the 2nd Platoon following their entry to the base and proceeded to the bomb dump area with instructions to destroy three bunkers. The fact that no satchel charges of any kind were found on dead or captured VC tends to support this theory. There appears to be no satisfactory explanation, however, for the failure of the VC to detonate the second and third satchel charges.

(5) This was the concluding incident related to the VC attack of 4 December 1966.



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12. (S) (Gp-3) RESULTS:

a. US and Free World Forces.

(1) Killed in action.

(a) USAF - 3

(b) ARVN - 3

(2) Missing in action. None

(3) Wounded in action.

(a) USAF - 15

(b) ARVN - 4

(4) Aircraft destroyed. None

(5) Aircraft damaged.

(a) Major (Requiring depot level maintenance)

<u>Type</u>	<u>Serial Number</u>	<u>Man Hours</u>	<u>Repair Cost</u>	<u>Sub-total</u>	<u>Total</u>
RF-101C	56-080	1,900	\$ 4,200.00		
CH-3C	6212579	135	10,500.00		
RC-47	42-93166	600	2,680.00	\$17,380.00	

(b) Minor

RF-4C	64-1044	144	820.00		
RF-101C	56-182	288	6,755.00		
RF-101C	56-071	22	2,800.00		
CH-3C	65-5695	16	3,150.00		
CH-3C	62-5692	150	1,400.00		
RB-57	55-4237	366	11,500.00		
RB-57	55-4264	96	2,800.00		
RC-47	45-1046	24	5,250.00		

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RC-47	43-48933	18	1,560.00		
RC-47	44-76668	16	3,500.00		
RC-47	43-48767	11	2,800.00	\$42,335.00	(Air Force) \$59,715.00
NC-121J	131641	40	120.00*		
NC-121J	131655	10	30.00*		
SP-2H	140452	85	255.00*		
SP-2H	147968	85	255.00*		
SP-2H	141236	85	255.00*		
SP-2H	141249	<u>1,200</u>	<u>3,600.00*</u>		(USN) <u>\$ 4,515.00</u>
TOTALS		5,290			\$64,230.00

(*NOTE: Dollar computation of damaged US Navy aircraft is based upon estimated number of man-hours to repair only and does not include cost of materials).
(SOURCE: p, v, w)

(6) Facilities/material damaged/destroyed.

- (a) MD-3 Engine Driven Generator Set, 100% destroyed.
Cost factor is \$15,650.00 (w)
- (b) MA-1A Gas Turbine Compressor, 15% destroyed. 144 man hours to repair at a cost of \$1,025.00 (w)
- (c) Air Police Vehicles.
 1. 65B8560, 11/2 ton, 65% destroyed
 2. 65B8525, Pickup, 40% destroyed
 3. 65B8552, 11/2 ton, 100% destroyed
 4. 65B8509, Pickup, 100% destroyed
 5. 65B8512, Pickup, 100% destroyed
- (d) Weapons (Air Police).
 1. M-16, 5.56MM, Rifle - 100% damage

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2. M-16, 5.56MM, Rifle - Repairable
3. M-16, 5.56MM, Rifle - Repairable
4. M-16, 5.56MM, Rifle - Unknown *LIA*

(e) Radios (Air Police).

1. One (1) Motorola U43 HHT 1130E mobile radio unit with accessories. 100% destroyed.
2. One (1) Motorola Portable Handy-Talkie. *LIA*

(f) Miscellaneous.

1. One (1) each pair Cannon Binoculars, 7 X 50. *LIA*
2. Very minor Structural damage from shock.

NOTE: Items in Para (d) 4, (e) 2, and (f) 1 were lost in action.

b. Enemy.

(1) Killed in action (KBA, TAN SON NHUT AB).

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(2) Captured. 4 (Wounded. 3)

(3) Equipment and Materiel losses.

(a) Weapons.

<u>Number</u>	<u>Type</u>
8	SKS Carbines (Chicom type 56, 7.62MM)
5	AK Submachine guns (Chicom type 56, 7.62 MM assault rifle)
4	VC Type B-40 Anti-tank grenade launchers (Chicom type 56, USSR Model)
2	US M-79 grenade launchers
1	CKC Rifle
1	Machine Pistol (Chicom type 50, 7.62MM)

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(b) Munitions

<u>Number</u>	<u>Type</u>
1	VC type 7Kg Directional Mine (Claymore)
10	VC type B-40 Anti-tank grenades (Chicom type 56, USSR Model RPG-2) with eight propellant charges.
10	Bangalore Torpedoes
6	US 60MM Mortar rounds with 5 fuses
2	Chicom RKG-3T Anti-tank grenades (USSR Model RKG-3)
2	Chicom type 1/M-33 Frag grenades
5	Chicom type M-32 Frag grenades
41	VC Homemade blast grenades (Resembles OD Pork and Beans Can)
44	VC Stick type blast grenades
35	US 40MM rifle grenades (All removed from VC KIA)
2	US M-26 Frag grenades (dud fired)
1	US Mk III offensive grenade (Removed from VC KIA)
6	9MM small arms clips - approximately 40 rds/clip
41	7.62 small arms clips - approximately 30 rds/clip
130	9MM loose rounds (approximated)
260	8.62MM loose rounds (approximated)

(SOURCE: g and t)

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NOTE: An accurate inventory of captured weapons could not be compiled due to seizure of such materiel by VNAF authorities who subsequently refused to provide any information on either the number or type of weapons thus acquired.

13. (C) (Gp-4) Plans:

a. 377th Air Police Squadron. As in the case of the 13 April 1966 attack, the successful response of the 377th Air Police Squadron to the attack of 4 December 1966 can be attributed to the effectiveness of procedures contained in Squadron Regulation 207-4, "Security Rapid Reaction Plan". This local directive, through practice exercises and personnel indoctrination, has proven capable of insuring the mobilization and deployment of the entire squadron in a maximum of thirty minutes. The regulation is designated to be as simple and practical as possible, and is based on the assumption that there will be no reliable prior warning of any attack; that no attack on TSN will be of prolonged duration; that minimum response time of the maximum number of Air Police personnel is the decisive element; and that the precise nature of any threat and the appropriate counter measure can only be determined at the time of the attack.

b. US Forces.

(1) During the 4 December 1966 attack, Air Police forces and Task Force 35 reacted smoothly and rapidly, and were successful in blocking the main penetration/escape route used by the VC. Although the precise location of this route was unknown at the time, the deployment of available forces to the West perimeter, which resulted in this blocking effect, was neither random nor accidental. On 16 October 1966, an attack plan for US Quick Reaction Forces developed jointly by the 377th Air Police Squadron and Special Troops, USARV, established a series of contingency options based on recognized routes of approach available to the enemy. These options established general guidelines for the reaction of US Forces to attacks from these routes. Option B of that plan considered VC penetration from a point on the west perimeter, and established guidelines for the deployment of Air Police and Task Force 35 forces to counter such an attack. Based on sentry dog alerts and the apparent movement of the VC on 4 December 1966, the likelihood of a penetration from the west was considered most probable, and US Forces were deployed in accordance with the guidelines of the plan.

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(2) The Joint US Forces Defense Plan 1-66, dated 1 October 1966 which integrates and coordinates defense actions of the 377th Air Police Squadron and Special troops, USARV proved sound and served the purpose for which it was intended. The formal USAF support plan for the joint plan has been published at the direction of Headquarters 7AF.

c. US-RVN Forces. At present there is no effective plan for the coordination of all US and RVN forces with a responsibility for base defense. This is not due to inaction. US Forces have reached agreement on their portion of this responsibility in the form of the Joint US Forces Defense Plan. Vietnamese Forces, VNAF and ARVN, have developed an RVNAF Base Defense Plan and have established a unified command, the Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area. Utilizing these two plans, US and RVN, as a point of departure it now remains to reach agreement on a single combined plan which will provide an effective base defense system. (A coordinated plan is currently being prepared for review by all TSN forces in conjunction with the USAF - Advisory Group.)

14. (C) (Gp-4) Special Equipment and Techniques:

a. Sentry Dogs. A sentry dog team was the first element of the Air Police forces to detect the presence of VC within the interior of the base. Due to the nature of the terrain chosen by the VC for their approach route and the direction of the prevailing winds in relation thereto, it was possible for the assault force to pass through two sentry dog posts before being detected on a third post. It is apparent that the effectiveness of the sentry dogs along the penetration route could be enhanced.

b. Grenade Launcher, M-79. Although twelve of these weapons were available for use, none were employed. This circumstance arises from the fact that targets were consistently not detected until Air Police were within less than safe minimum range for this weapon. As a consequence hand grenades were issued for use in search and destroy operations.

c. Shotgun, Model 77, 12 Gauge Stevens Pump (Savage). This weapon, an old item in the inventory, proved conclusively unsatisfactory. Three of these weapons, issued to Air Police posted in aircraft revetments jammed, thereby preventing VC who had penetrated this area from being taken under fire. This deficiency has long been recognized and replacement 12 gauge Winchester Pump, riot type shotguns have been on order since May 1966.

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d. Rifle, 5.56MM, M-16. Without exception, sentry dog handlers consider the present position of the sling on this weapon to be unsatisfactory. All would prefer that the sling be attached to the top rather than the under side of this weapon. With the sling attached in this fashion the weapon can be slung from the left shoulder and carried in a firing position on the right side of the body, thereby simplifying the handler's task of managing a dog while maintaining an alert attitude. Local maintenance shops are currently attempting to devise a means of effecting this change in the position of the sling without any modification of the weapon.

e. Bayonet. It became readily apparent in the course of search and destroy operations that a bayonet attached to the M-16 rifle would have been most useful. Requisition action has been initiated to obtain a bayonet for each M-16 rifle authorized.

15. (C) (Gp-4) Commander's Analysis: The VC attack on Tan Son Nhut Air Base on 4 December 1966 was the largest such action directed against a USAF facility in the Republic of Vietnam since the beginning of hostilities. The effective reaction by US Forces in general and 377th Air Police Squadron in particular was successful both in limiting the amount of damage to US resources and in killing or capturing almost the total VC assault force. Inasmuch as prisoner interrogations revealed that the purpose of the attack was to prove the VC were winning and to heighten morale of VC soldiers and cadres, the outcome can only be construed as a decisive VC defeat, both psychologically and militarily. Lessons learned from this action include the following:

a. RVNAF responsible for external defense have not yet attained a reliable capability to detect hostile forces moving against the base. Nor can the RVNAF, responsible for perimeter defense, be relied upon. Hence the effective defense of Tan Son Nhut necessarily rests with the US Forces.

b. Reliable prior warning is unlikely and defense plans must provide for such contingency.

c. A rapid and effective quick reaction capability is the decisive factor and within the USAF this can be provided only by the Air Police.

d. During this attack, only Air Police forces were involved in actual engagement with the enemy on the Air Base. Although over 6,000 rounds were expended, no injuries were inflicted on friendly forces. This fire control discipline cannot be expected from augmentation personnel, a reality which in part explains our reluctance to employ such personnel

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in base defense operations except as a last resort.

e. Ordnance and munitions captured by US Forces should be retained for proper evaluation by US technical intelligence agencies. Efforts by non-US personnel to seize this equipment should be resisted until further intelligence value has been gained by US agencies.

f. Effective utilization of sentry dogs under condition of broken terrain, dense ground cover and unfavorable winds requires, where feasible, that posts be established in depth so that hostile forces approaching from any direction must cross a number of posts, thereby increasing the probability of detection.

g. Maximum destruction of all ground cover by burning, defoliation or scraping the surface is essential to deprive enemy forces of a natural means for concealment. Fence lines in particular should be cleared of vegetation and should be properly illuminated to reduce the opportunity for undetected penetration of the wire. *Underway*

h. Difficulties were encountered by Central Security Control in maintaining an accurate log of events as they occurred. This problem will be met in the future by use of a tape recorder which is to be installed in the control room for recording emergency operations.

i. When air-dropped flares were not available, M-127 illumination nap flares were employed in large number to provide required illumination. The available base reserve stock of this item was nearly depleted in one night's operation, pointing to a need for a large emergency store of these flares at all 7th Air Force Bases. (A large supply is en-route and should be in place by 1 January 1967.)

j. Only general overall direction of Air Police operations can be provided by CSC in an engagement of this type. Detailed direction and coordination must be exercised by officers and senior NCO's on the scene.

k. A major problem in coordinating US/RVN defense actions arises from command posts/communications centers maintained under the Vietnamese concept. Vietnamese personnel, officers and enlisted men, assigned to these centers during non-duty hours are frequently unavailable. Consequently, they are not knowledgeable of the situation, and when called upon for information or decisions are confused. Some command posts maintained for status purposes are useless due to lack of communications equipment, and their senior personnel appear offended if bypassed

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during emergency conditions. Once the new hardened Joint Command Post is completed this should eliminate much of the confusion and misunderstanding.

l. Air Police training has traditionally been directed toward effective static defense, with small mobile strike forces for response to affected areas. The attack of 4 December 1966 demonstrated that Air Police in this theater can become involved in a typical infantry engagement for which their training is minimal. Although radio contact with QRF's and the combat experience of a few well-placed individuals resulted in a safe, effective search-and-destroy operation, general infantry training for all Air Police would have been of great value. Primary training needed is in squad tactics, employment of automatic weapons and hand grenades, and proper approach and deployment from vehicles.

m. Enemy penetration of the MLR and the aircraft parking area is attributed to the following: Extinguishment of all airfield lights upon initiation of the attack; inoperative condition of the low intensity lighting along concertina wire barrier due to lack of parts; small size and light weight of VC which facilitated penetration of concertina wire; jamming of weapon on Post 15; unmanned status of Post 43; and openings between revetments. Corrective action taken or in progress includes: Defoliation of concertina fence line; strengthening of concertina fence; renewed emphasis on weapons maintenance; repair of low intensity lighting; and closing of openings between revetments.

n. Once the VC have lost their leader(s), the discipline and direction of their operation deteriorates rapidly and there is no longer a single, disciplined force with which to contend.

16. (U) SOURCES:

a. Air Police Security Blotter (AF Form 53), 377th Air Police Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN, 0501, 3 December to 1215, 5 December 1966. (U)

b. Air Police Alert Blotter (AF Form 53), 377th Air Police Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN, 0110-1000, 4 December 1966. (U)

c. Air Police Security Blotter (AF Form 53), 377th Air Police Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN, 1100, 5 December to 0800, 6 December 1966. (U)

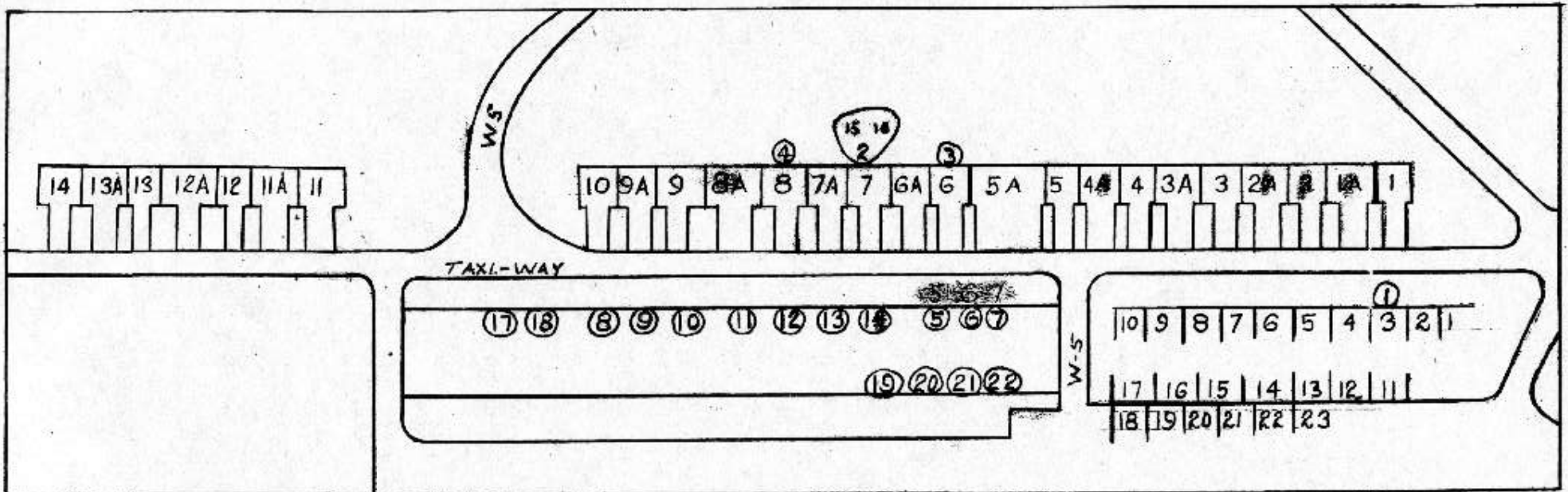
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- d. Air Police Blotter (AF Form 53) for Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Point (Joint Command Post), 377th Air Police Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN, 0545, 3 December to 1600, 4 December 1966. (U)
- e. Operations Journal, Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area, 1700, 3 December to 1515, 5 December 1966. (U)
- f. Air Police Blotter (AF Form 53) for Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Point (Joint Command Post), 377th Air Police Squadron, 1600, 4 December to 0620, 5 December 1966. (U)
- g. Combined Military Interrogation Center Special Report, RVNAF Report Number 0912/TTTVHH/OT, 5 December 1966. (C)
- h. Report of Investigation, Viet Cong (VC), Initial Results of VC Prisoner Interrogation, Tan Son Nhut Air Base Attack (U), Report Number 1 655 0347 66, 50D OSI, 7 December 1966. (S)
- i. Report of Investigation, Viet Cong (VC), VC Attack on Tan Son Nhut Air Base (U), Report Number 1 655 0334 66, 50D OSI, 7 December 1966. (S)
- j. Surface Weather Observation, SC Form 444, Detachment 2, 30th Weather Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, 4 December 1966. (U)
- k. Tan Son Nhut Base Operations NOTAM Report, 031207, 4 December 1966. (U)
- l. Letter, 377th Combat Support Group (BSO), Damage Report and Recovered Munitions, (not dated). (C)
- m. Explosive-Ordnance-Demolition Log of Events, 377th Munitions Maintenance Squadron, 0130-1630, 4 December 1966. (U)
- n. Scramble/Divert Log, 4 December 1966, Tactical Air Control Center, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN. (U)
- o. Tactical Air Operations Log, 4-5 December 1966, Tactical Air Control Center, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN. (U)
- p. 460th Tactical Recon. Wing Message, DCMMC, 01216 December 1966, Damage Report, RCS: AF-A45 (7AF-1), 8 December 1966. (S)
- q. 377th Air Police Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN.

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PARKING LOCATION OF AIRCRAFT DAMAGED IN THE TAN SON NHUT A.B. MORTAR ATTACK 4 DEC 66



1. RF-4	1044	6. CH-3	692	11. RC-47	166	16. MD3	21. SP-2H	968
2. RF-101	080	7. CH-3	579	12. RC-47	933	17. RC-421J	22. SP-2H	236
3. RF-101	182	8. RB-57	237	13. RC-47	668	18. RC-421J		
4. RF-101	071	9. RB-57	267	14. RC-47	767	19. SP-2H		
5. CH-3C	693	10. RC-47	1046	15. MA1A		20. SP-2H		

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r. After Operations Statement, Major James S. Cronen, 3rd Platoon Commander, 120th Aviation Company, Capital Aviation Battalion, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN. (U)

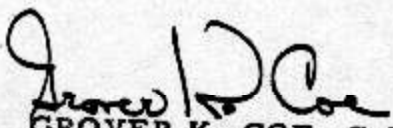
s. Counter-Mortar Radar Journal, 79th Artil. Detachment, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, 4 December 1966. (U)

t. Memo For Record, Recovered Munitions Items, 4-5 December 1966, Explosive Ordnance Demolition Branch, 377th Munitions Maintenance Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN, 5 December 1966. (U)

u. Memorandum For the Record, After Action Report of VC Attack on Tan Son Nhut Air Base, 3-4 December 1966, Headquarters Special Troops, USARV, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN, 19 December 1966. (C)

v. Patrol Squadron 17, Commander Task Group 115.6, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN.























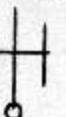
w. Oceanographic Air Survey Unit Detachment, Western Pacific, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN.


GROVER K. COE, Colonel, USAF
Commander

- 6 Atch
1. Map of TSN AB with key, (C) (1 cy)
 2. Detail "A" to atch 1, (C) (1 cy)
 3. Map, Saigon and TSN AB, (C) (1 cy)
 4. Map, TSN AB Canine areas, (U)
 5. Diagram, Damaged Aircraft parking positions (S) (1 cy)
 6. Photographs with caption sheet (U)

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- KEY TO MAPS -

	V.C. KIA
	V.C. Captured (not wounded)
	V.C. Captured, wounded
	A.P. KIA
	A.P. Wounded
	K-9 KIA
	V.C. Platoon
	V.C., More than a squad less than a platoon
	A.P. platoon (equivalent)
	A.P. MLR Bunker, unmanned
	A.P. MLR Bunker, M-16 Rifle
	A.P. MLR Machinegun Bunker (60 Cal) with M-16
	ARVN Gun Tower with Browning Automatic Rifle
	Wheeled personnel carrier
	A.P. Defensive Positions
	Enemy March Route
	Probable enemy route
	Enemy movement after stop
	Fire fight
	7Kg Directional Mine (Claymore)
	Light Mortar Location (60MM)
	Light Machine Gun
	105 Howitzer

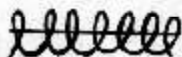
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Explosion

S

Unexploded Satchel Charge



Multiple Tier Concertina Wire



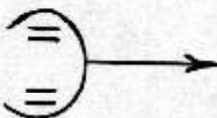
Multiple Strand, interwoven, barbed wire fence



Perimeter Fencing, not barbed



V.C. Support/Operation Base



Ambush Point



Posted Air Policeman
(Reference US Army FM-21-30, June 1965)

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HEADQUARTERS
CAPITAL MILITARY DISTRICT ADVISORY DETACHMENT
ADVISORY TEAM 100
APO 96243

CMDAD

18 February 1967

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

TO: COMUSMACV
ATTN: J343
APO 96222

1. (S) GENERAL

a. A Viet Cong Force of approximately 60 penetrated Tan Son Nhut Airbase by infiltration on the night of 3 December 1966, with the mission of destroying aircraft, equipment and ammunition, and to create repercussions exploitable by VC in Saigon, Gia Dinh City and surrounding territory. A bonus effect of the attack would be in the realm of VC morale and improvement of the VC public image of invincibility.

b. The raid was conducted by the Special Action Unit, A2, C10, one platoon of 1st Company, 6th Battalion, 165 A/VC Regiment and 60 mm mortar 1st Combat Support Company 165 A/VC Regiment.

c. The raid was preceded by a reconnaissance conducted over a two month period by seven members of the A2, C10 Special Action Unit. The reconnaissance failed to disclose a concertina fence close to the hanger area, and a row of bunkers which is the US Air Force Main Line of Resistance (MLR). This unplanned for obstacle resulted in the death of several members of the force assigned the mission of attacking the hanger and C47 helicopter area.

d. The operations briefing for participants in the attack was conducted on 2 December in the Ly Van Manh area. A sketch map was used and the elements were briefly separated.

e. Movement of the attacking force from the Ly Van Manh area to Tan Son Nhut was conducted in two stages. The force departed Ly Van Manh area, (XS625880) by platoon at approximately 021900 December and moved by sampan and foot to vicinity of Vinh Loc (XS700790), arriving at about 022100 December. The force rested here until 021900 December. At this

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SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

18 Feb 67

time they began movement, by foot, to Tan Son Nhut Airbase. The interval between platoons during this movement was approximately 100 meters. The force arrived outside the Tan Son Nhut fence (Vicinity 795962) at about 032400 December (Tab 1).

f. The fences were cut by one member of the force. The force entered Tan Son Nhut during the next ten minutes and began moving into predetermined positions.

g. Fourteen men (four from the Special Action Unit and 10 from the 165A Regiment) positioned themselves inside the fence near the point of entrance (XS796963). This element was engaged later by USAF personnel and three were killed.

h. The 60mm mortar detachment (nine men including one from the Special Action Unit) employed the mortar vicinity XS803963, a distance of 600 meters from the point of entrance to Tan Son Nhut (TAB 2). It was reported that a mortar and crew was observed on Tan Son Nhut by an Air Policeman who saw the weapon being fired toward the aircraft parking area. One PW stated during his interrogation that the mortar crew was emplaced as stated above and that 12 rounds were fired immediately following the initial small arms fire. EOD personnel who searched the area following the attack could find no evidence of mortar rounds having exploded. No duds were found and no damage can be specifically ascribed to mortar fire. Numerous reports of mortars being fired from positions outside Tan Son Nhut were received during the attack. One report of a "possible" mortar position was given by the Counter-mortar Radar Detachment which is located on Tan Son Nhut. This report was based on readings which could have been mortar rounds but could also have been caused by other factors. In this instance, as well as in several others, friendly forces reacted to neutralize or destroy the reported mortar. Searches of the suspected areas during the action and subsequent thereto have failed to disclose evidence to substantiate the presence of mortars. It should be noted that the threat considered most probable and most critical was a mortar or combination mortar/recoilless attack such as occurred on 13 April 1966. This may have preconditioned participating friendly forces to expect a mortar attack and may account for the numerous reports just mentioned.

i. After emplacing the mortar, the assault force, composed of the remainder of the Special Action Unit reinforced with the B40 elements of the 165A Regiment (33 - 35 men in all), moved toward the hanger area. The positioning of forces took approximately one hour.

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18 Feb 67

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

j. The assault force split into two groups. One small group (number undetermined but containing at least 3 men) moved to the Old Bomb Dump which is located North of the new runway (under construction). The other group moved toward the Ch7 helicopter area which is South of the NE-SW Runway (TAB 2).

k. The assault force was discovered at 040110 December by an Air Force sentry dog handler immediately North of the NE-SW Runway. By 040114, an estimated eight or nine VC had crossed the NE-SW Runway and had succeeded in passing through a concertina fence and a row of defensive bunkers (Air Force MIR). This group was fired on by an Air Force guard whose weapon jammed immediately thereafter. The VC group entered the Ch7 helicopter parking area, firing and throwing grenades. This force was engaged by Air Police posted as close security guards. One VC was killed, the others retreated by the same route they had entered. They did not succeed in entering the revetments in which aircraft were parked.

L. Concurrent with the penetration just described, another group of VC attempted to enter the Ch7 helicopter parking area at a point approximately 200 meters west of the first group. Thirteen were killed after they had succeeded in crossing the NE-SW Runway but before they could reach the line of bunkers (MIR). None of this group was observed to have escaped.

m. The group which moved to the Old Bomb Dump succeeded in blowing two conex containers containing US Navy five inch shells and in emplacing two additional charges which were discovered and removed on 6 December by friendly forces. Sporadic actions and encounters continued until 050630 December. These resulted from VC attempting to withdraw and escape and from friendly search operations. The last encounter with VC occurred at approximately 051200 when one VC was killed just north of the new runway opposite the point of the initial sighting on 4 December.

n. The attack resulted in 3 US KIA, 3 ARVN KIA, 15 US WIA, 4 ARVN WIA and damage to 20 aircraft (estimated cost of repair - \$64,230.00), destruction of five vehicles and one generator and damage, destruction, or loss of a few additional items.

o. The VC incurred 30 KIA, 5 captured, and the loss of at least 23 weapons in addition to a relatively large quantity of grenades and ammunition. Documents captured by the US 196th Brigade during Operation Cedar Falls reveals that VC recorded the loss of personnel at 35 KIA or missing (TAB 3).

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18 Feb 67

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

p. Once the VC force was discovered, friendly reaction both US and VN, was prompt and effective. Damage was minimized and the VC suffered a defeat both military and psychological.

2. (S) INTELLIGENCE:

a. General Enemy Situation

(1) There are no VC main force units operating in the immediate vicinity of Tan Son Nhut Airbase. VC units which have an area of operation near the Airbase consist of three guerrilla squads. The operational areas of these squads are in the vicinity of XS820980, XS781949, and XS762950. The 6th Battalion, 165th Regiment is the Local Force unit that usually operates in Tan Binh. This is the Sub-sector through which the VC infiltrated for the attack on the airbase. The VC were active in the general area of Vinh Loc Village (XS718953) during th month of November. The rest area occupied by the attack force on 2 and 3 December was in the vicinity of this village. Seven VC initiated incidents three of which were significant, occurred near Vinh Loc in November. Elements of the 2d Marine Bn was attacked by an estimated VC Company vicinity XS725936 on 251610, November. Friendly losses were five KIA and eight WIA. An estimated 40 VC were KIA. The 2d Marine Bn received small arms fire in the vicinity of XS728949 on 241740 November, and in the vicinity of XS728950 on 212110 November. These incidents were possibly initiated by the VC to clear the area for the pending attack on Tan Son Nhut. The 2d Company, 6th Battalion, 165th Regiment has its base area in the Ly Van Manh area (XS650890). On occasion, the 1st Company has been sighted there also. This area is close to the initial assembly area used by VC for the attack on Tan Son Nhut (TAB 1).

(2) No reports were received of VC movement to Tan Son Nhut until the elements were actually inside.

b. Indications of Pending Attack.

The following information was reported to the Capital Military District Advisory Team, Tactical Operations Center (TOC).

<u>DTG</u>	<u>MESSAGE</u>
012240	JCP reported information relayed to them from National Police; the VC will mortar Tan Son Nhut during the period 1 to 31 December.
031505	CRD report; during December 1966, the VC plan to conduct a mortar and penetration attack on Tan Son Nhut. VC unit for the mission is C22. The attack will occur during daylight hours.
031715	Gia Dinh Sector reports that one company of the 2d Battalion, 165th Regiment has moved to vicinity XS818985, XS800990, and XS794982. Mission is to attack Tan Son Nhut.

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PAGE 4 OF 16 PAGES
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SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

18 Feb 67

031600 Headquarters of 6th VC Battalion, 165th Regiment plus unknown company of 100 men are located in vicinity of Rau Ram jungle, XS610915.

032130 Report from Tan Son Nhut Senior Advisor; 2d Service Battalion on alert in case of attack on Tan Son Nhut.

c. Enemy Forces.

(1) A2, C10 (formerly Special Action Unit F100)

Strength: 38 - 40

Weapons: Mainly light weapons

AK and K51 submachine guns

3 - M79 grenade launchers

2 - B40's

CKC Rifles

(2) 1st Platoon, 1st Company, 165th Regiment

Strength: 20

Weapons: 1 - B40

1 - M79

2 - AK's

AK Submachine guns

Rifles

(3) Mortar element, 4th Platoon, 1st Combat Support Company, 165th Regiment.

Strength: 8

Weapons: 1 - 60mm mortar

Small arms

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SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

18 Feb 67

3. (S) SEQUENCE OF EVENTS:

a. October - November (estimated)

A reconnaissance of the objective (TAN SON NHUT) was conducted by seven members of the A2, C10 Special Action Unit. During this period the reconnaissance team worked for periods of 5 - 6 days, rested for 5 - 6 days and repeated.

b. 02 December

The attack force elements were briefed by their leaders from sketch maps. The briefing was conducted in the Ly Van Manh area. The sketch showed only the objective area of the detachment being briefed. The locations of the US Air Force MIR was omitted from the sketch used to brief the Special Action Unit.

c. 021400: The entire force departed Ly Van Manh area (XS625880) (TAB 1).

d. 022100: The force arrived vicinity of Vinh Loc (XS700740).

e. 031400: The entire VC force, commanded by Tu Khinh, the Commander of the Special Action Unit, departed Vin Loc enroute to Tan Son Nhut (TAB 1).

f. 031715 - 1845: All ARVN units involved in the defense of Tan Son Nhut were notified of a possible attack. The 2d Service Battalion, located on Tan Son Nhut, was placed on 100% alert.

g. 031945: Flares were dropped around Tan Son Nhut.

h. 032400: The attack force arrived outside Tan Son Nhut (Vicinity XS795962) (TAB 1).

i. 032400 - 040110: The perimeter fences were cut By Tu Khinh. The attack force entered Tan Son Nhut and moved across the perimeter road to a position in the vicinity of XS797962. The security element, composed of 14 men, including four from the Special Action Unit, took positions inside the fence break in the vicinity of XS796963. The balance of the force moved to the vicinity of XS803963 where they emplaced the 60mm mortar. Nine men, including one member of the Special Action Unit,

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SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

18 Feb 67

remained with the mortar. The assault force moved toward the hanger/C47 parking area. Approximately three men carrying satchel charges left this group and went to the Old Bomb Dump (TAB 2).

j. 040110: The assault force was discovered on or near the NE-SW runway by a US Air Force dog handler who reported unidentified persons near his post. A USAF Security Alert Team (SAT) was dispatched to his location.

k. 040114: The assault force had crossed the runway and had encountered the concertina fence and line of bunkers previously referred to as having been omitted from the briefing sketch. (TAB 2)

One group of eight or nine men succeeded in passing under the poorly illuminated concertina, between the bunkers, and past the aircraft revetments into the C47/helicopter parking area. This group was discovered and fired on by a US Air Force guard in the vicinity of the bunkers. The guard reported their presence and that his weapon had jammed. This group moved eastward (except for one man who moved to the west and was killed) fired their weapons and threw grenades. They were taken under fire by Air Police who were posted as close-in security for the aircraft and withdrew, presumably by the route over which they had entered the parking area. This action lasted until approximately 040140. Numerous explosions took place during this time and most of the damage inflicted during the attack was incurred during this period. Concurrent with the action described above, the second group, at least 13 men, attempted to enter the C47/helicopter parking area at a point approximately 200 meters west of the first group. This second group was taken under fire from the line of bunkers and thirteen were killed and none were observed escaping.

l. 040115: A recoilless flash (probably a B40) followed by a ricochet and explosion on the runway was observed by a member of the 79th Counter Mortar Radar Detachment from the vicinity of XS804967. PW interrogation reports state that when the firing started, the mortar fired 12 rounds into the hanger area. No specific damage can be ascribed to this fire.

m. 040115: Counter Mortar Radar reported a possible mortar location at XS818985.

n. 040116: Permission to fire artillery on the suspected mortar positions was given by the Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area Commander.

o. 040117: VN artillery (105mm) fired 21 rounds on the suspected mortar position.

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SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

18 Feb 67

p. 040118: The SAT which had been dispatched to assist the dog handler who first reported the attacked reported his vehicle (M151) disabled by a mortar round or grenade.

Armed helicopters and flare ships were requested by Capital Military District. The alert standby armed helicopters were airborne within two minutes after hearing the firing. By 0125, a second team was airborne. Both teams began to search the area north of the Airbase. The following suspected mortar positions were reported by USAF Central Security Control (CSC) aircraft and fired on by armed helicopters and A1E aircraft: XS748996, XS799986, XS803988, XS810989 and XS819989.

q. 040125: Headquarters Special Troops, USARV, was notified of the attack. All units were alerted by 0140. Direct liaison was established with CSC. Forward Air Control (FAC) was informed of the attack by Capital Military District and request to support. FAC was airborne at 0145. The Airborne Division (VN) mortars fired 40 rounds at suspected enemy mortar locations.

r. 040140 - 0145: TF5 and TF35, Special Troops, USARV were alerted. The village of Thong Tuy Hoi reported 10 rounds of mortar or artillery had fallen in the village. Four civilians were killed and property damaged.

s. 040150: Capital Military District instructed Go Vap Sub-sector to deploy forces from XT807007 to XT738986, Hoc Mon Sub-sector to deploy forces from XS770976 to XT807007, and the 2d Airborne Battalion to deploy forces from XS770951 to XS784867.

(1) A 14 man reaction force of the 53d Regional Force Battalion led by the Battalion Commander, left the Battalion CP at Ba Queo (XS793943) to search a suspected mortar position area to the north of their CP. This force, moving north on Highway 1, was ambushed by an unknown number of VC in the vicinity of XS787961 at approximately 0150. Three friendly KIA's and four friendly WIA's resulted from the ambush and subsequent actions.

(2) The reaction force dispersed. One element of this force continued to report being in contact with the VC and that the VC was firing a "medium caliber indirect fire weapon". Armed helicopter support was requested. This particular action received a great deal of attention and resulted in the commitment of armed helicopters which

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18 Feb 67

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

expended much time and ordance, the commitment of elements of the 2d Airborne Battalion to the vicinity of the ambush site, the dispatch of other forces to the 53d Battalion CP prepared for further commitment and, in general, added to the existing uncertainty as to the location, strength, activity, and intentions of the enemy forces. The site of the ambush was approximately 700 meters west of the point of entrance to Tan Son Nhut; however, it is as yet not confirmed that the ambush force was a part of the force which attacked Tan Son Nhut. Examination of the area following the action failed to disclose any enemy casualties or equipment.

(3) Although the ambush site is only 700 meters west of the point of entrance to Tan Son Nhut, it is doubtful that the ambush force was a part of the force which executed the attack on the airfield.

t. 040145 - 0210: The VC on the airbase were attempting to withdraw. USAF units deployed in blocking positions; from the 051 gate to the west ramp, a distance of 500 meters; facing north along the east-west inner perimeter road from the west perimeter road (XS747954) for a distance of 400 meters; and along the west perimeter road from XS797954 north-east to the Ba Queo Receiver Site, a distance of 500 meters. This last position covered the entrance-escape route of the VC. Two 1½ ton trucks and one ½ ton pick-up truck, located in front of them, had stopped on the road in front of their position prior to their arrival.

(1) Forces of the Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area began searching a mango field in the vicinity of XS815985 and XS810989.

(2) One company of the 2d Service Battalion was sent to the Headquarters of the 53d RF Battalion at Ba Queo.

(3) The 30th Ranger Battalion (2 companies) was ordered to come to Saigon from Thu Duc.

(4) Hoc Mon, Go Vap and 2d Marine Battalion forces completed their deployment in assigned areas.

u. 040210 - 0230: The USAF force blocking the entrance-escape route received heavy fire from small arms, automatic weapons, rocket launchers, and hand grenades from the west side of the road in the vicinity of the perimeter fence. This fire was returned and the exchange lasted approximately 10 minutes. VC fire ceased and the USAF force advanced toward the fence finding 3 VC KIA, 2 USAF KIA and 2 USAF WIA. The USAF personnel had been riding in the vehicles previously mentioned

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CMDAD

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

18 Feb 67

and were killed or wounded prior to this engagement. The VC force was evidently the 14 man security force left at the entrance to cover the withdrawal.

(1) The 60mm mortar crew was discovered in its initial position by a dog handler. The dog handler fired at the mortar crew who returned the fire, wounded the dog handler, and displaced to a position 350 meters north of the NE-SW runway. 60mm ammunition containers and discarded increments left behind by the crew indicated that the mortar may have been fired from this second position. (TAB 2)

(2) Two conex containers, located in the Old Bomb Dump area, and containing US Navy five inch shells were blown at 0220.

(3) An armed helicopter fire team from the 173d Aviation Company joined those working around Tan Son Nhut.

(4) TF5, USARV, reached its position on the eastern perimeter with the mission of protecting USARV Headquarters and other installations in the area.

(5) Vietnamese artillery fired 10 rounds to XS810989, a suspected mortar location.

(6) All artillery fire was suspended at 0225 because of danger to friendly forces operating in the areas surrounding Tan Son Nhut. Air support, USAF, VNAF, and Army Aviation under the control of the Duty Forward Air Controller (FAC) for CMD/RSSZ, effectively covered the area. Flares, visual reconnaissance, and armed helicopters were used. Fighter bomber aircraft were airborne over the area and were available if required. The FAC performance in communicating with air and ground elements, coordinating and controlling the air support, and simultaneously performing visual reconnaissance was particularly noteworthy.

v. 040230 - 0300: The 2d Service Battalion's reaction force arrived at the 051 gate prior to further movement to the CP of the 53d RF Battalion at Ba Queo. This movement was ordered at 0245 by the Commander, Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area.

10
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PAGE 10 OF 16 PAGES
COPY 1 OF 8 COPIES

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CMDAD

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

18 Feb 67

(1) During this time, guards along the west perimeter continued to fire at possible VC locations. Armed helicopters and FAC main-
tained surveillance over the areas outside the west perimeter and flare
ships continued to drop flares.

(2) Elements of the 2d Airborne Battalion surrounded the
VINATEXCO buildings (vicinity XS787959) which reportedly were under VC
attack.

w. 040300 - 0330: The 2d Service Battalion's reaction force
moved to Ba Queo.

(1) The point where the VC had entered was discovered.

(2) A sentry dog handler reported VC near his post and
requested an ambulance for a wounded dog handler supervisor. The dog
handler was discovered KIA at 0415. (TAB 2)

(3) The Base Commander (VN) was directed to patrol the
perimeter of Tan Son Nhut and prevent the escape of the VC.

x. 040330 - 0400: Armed helicopters searched the area outside
the west perimeter fence attempting to locate enemy personnel. None
were discovered.

y. 040400 - 0530: 30th Ranger Battalion (-) arrived in Saigon
and was directed to search the area vicinity of XS770952, XS743946, and
XS784966. This operation terminated at 040850 with negative results.
(TAB 3)

(1) Headquarters Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area requested
permission to conduct an operation vicinity XS792992, XS805984, XS792950,
and XS783970. This request was approved. Three companies of the 2d
Service Battalion were employed. Ten suspects were apprehended. (TAB 2)

(2) Gia Dinh Sector was directed to conduct a police oper-
ation in vicinity XS785996, XS808007, XS820998, XS815997 and XS817980.
This operation was subsequently conducted. No results were obtained.
(TAB 2)

(3) All Air Police activities (except for forces on the
perimeter) were suspended at 0400 to permit reorganization and clari-
fication of the situation.

(4) A systematic search of the flight line, aircraft and
revetments, runways, the USAF cantonment area, and clubs was conducted. No
demolitions were discovered and the base was determined to be safe for
operations.

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18 Feb 67

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

(5) Two platoons of TF 35, USARV, were deployed in the vicinity of XS808974 near the entrances to the USAF bomb storage area, and two platoons were deployed within vicinity of the west end of the runway.

(6) All vehicles enroute to Saigon through Hoc Mon Sub-sector were stopped and searched.

(7) Road blocks were established in Go Vap.

(8) FAC and armed helicopters continued surveillance of the western perimeter.

The area bounded by XS876489, XS820996, XS835984, and XS824980 was searched by a force from the Go Vap depot area. Six scout dogs were used. This operation terminated at 0825 with negative results.

z. 040530 - 1000. At 0625 USAF personnel on the western perimeter near the entrance point sighted and engaged several VC moving toward their position from the south. The VC returned the fire wounding one Air Policeman. Two VC surrendered and during a search of the area, two other VC bodies were discovered. At about the same time, two VC surrendered near the west end of the NE-SW runway.

(1) A search of a 500 meter wide area from the 051 gate north to a point north of the Ba Queo Receiver Site, which began at 0810 and terminated at 0920, disclosed no enemy forces. The force conducting this sweep received fire from the area initially but, after they paused in their movement to determine location of other friendly units, failed to find any VC.

(2) TF5 and TF35 were withdrawn from their deployment locations and reverted to alert status.

(3) The NE-SW runway was opened for traffic at 0829.

(4) Operations were conducted in the areas west of Tan Son Nhut, to include the Vin Loc area. Results were negative.

(5) Armed helicopters were released at 1000.

aa. 041000 - 2000: Operations in the areas west of Tan Son Nhut continued with negative results.

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12

PAGE 12 OF 16 PAGES
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18 Feb 67

Operations on base were normal. Observation was maintained over the suspected area inside the western perimeter.

bb. 042000 - 050630: At 042021, a VC was sighted and fired on by a USAF sentry dog handler in the vicinity of area K-34. A Quick Reaction Team (QRT) was dispatched to cover other possible escape routes.

A search and destroy operation in the suspected area by USAF was organized at 2100. Eight VC were killed in this area during the operation and one US Air Policeman was wounded. The operation terminated at 050630. (TAB 2)

cc. 050630 - 071030: A repeat search of the suspected area was conducted by 130 Air Police from 050825 - 1153 without incident. At 1153, a VC moving in the area south of the Old Bomb Dump was killed by a SAT. The search terminated at 1340 without further incident.

At 061400 one satchel charge was discovered against a conex container in the Old Bomb Dump. An additional two boxes of US manufactured explosives were discovered in the immediate vicinity. A second satchel charge was discovered at 071030 in an adjacent bunker. The locations of these explosives were adjacent to those blown on 4 December.

4. (S) DISCUSSION:

a. Intelligence reports, indicating attack on Tan Son Nhut, received a considerable period of time preceding the attack, were such that they were of little or no value to friendly forces. By far the most of these reports had no rating or a very low rating assigned by the evaluating unit. Reports which could be investigated were found to be invalid. The report received on 3 December stating that Tan Son Nhut was to be attacked, and upon which all units were alerted, was not factual but coincidental.

b. Four visual reconnaissance missions were flown over the area on 3 December and no unusual activity was noted.

c. The route taken by the attack force passed close to friendly units and to hamlets, yet no report of this movement was forwarded. The same is true of the withdrawal. (TAB 1)

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SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

18 Feb 67

d. Despite illumination provided by flares dropped in the vicinity of the airbase, and the notification to all units of a possible attack, the movement of the VC force was not discovered.

e. Overall, intelligence was very poor and requires improvement. It is noted that there was a great increase in the quantity of intelligence reports pertaining to Tan Son Nhut received following this attack but no increase in creditability has been observed.

f. Reports submitted by subordinate units during the attack contained much erroneous information. Mortar locations were reported which did not in fact exist. Contact with VC elements were reported when such contact had not been made or the reports otherwise exaggerated VC strength and armament. Friendly forces reacted to many of these reports. There were numerous instances of random firing by friendly forces. Although exaggerated reports and incidents of this nature are to be expected, improvement is required.

g. Following the mortar and recoilless attack on Tan Son Nhut of 13 April 1966, several recommendations were made and approved for the defense of the airfield. Those which had not been completed or implemented prior to this attack, thus contributing to the successful penetration of the airfield and to much of the confusion which followed, are:

- (1) Perimeter lighting had not been completed.
- (2) Perimeter fences had not been repaired or improved to the extent required.
- (3) The perimeter minefield had not been maintained or replaced.
- (4) Defoliation of the perimeter and selected areas within, to permit observation and fields of fire, had not been started.
- (5) A coordinated, combined, and joint defense plan for the internal defense had not been completed.
- (6) Towers had not been emplaced and manned in numbers required.

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18 Feb 67

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J-3-32)

(7) A command post, manned by representatives of all headquarters participating in the defense, had not been established.

(8) Since the most recent attack, each of the above listed recommendations has been acted upon and work toward completion is being expedited.

h. The route taken by the attacking force from Ly Van Manh to Vinh Loc is through an area not controlled by GVN forces. This is particularly true during the hours of darkness. This part of the route was therefore relatively secure. The initial portion of the route from Vinh Loc to Tan Son Nhut was generally along a political boundary between districts. This boundary also divided defending forces' areas of responsibility. Although numerous ambush positions had been established by friendly forces, the distance between these positions, the dependence on sight and hearing by friendly forces, and perhaps, the lack of alertness of some of the ambush forces, all contributed to the successful movement of the attacking force. No use was made of moving patrols to enable defending forces to more effectively cover the area, scout or sentry dogs, and listening and night lighting devices. Except for moving patrols, the means just mentioned were and are not available.

i. The condition of the airfield perimeter defense; i.e., distance between and strength of guard posts, minefields, fences, and concealed approaches were well known to the attacking force. Penetration presented few problems.

j. The VC force succeeded in penetrating a distance of approximately 600 - 700 meters and in spending in excess of one hour within Tan Son Nhut prior to detection. Tall grass, drainage ditches, and other cover and concealment, available and used by the raiders, was also effective, coupled with the wind direction, in concealing their presence from sentry dogs as well as guards.

k. Once the VC force was discovered, alerting of friendly units and reaction to the attack was prompt. US forces reacted in accordance with a coordinated plan. Vietnamese forces reacted in accordance with their plan in so far as on base activities were concerned. Vietnamese actions off base were directed in reaction to the attack situation and, although they did not contact elements of the force, were in general well conceived and executed and insured that no sizable VC force was present in the area.

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18 Feb 67

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66
(RCS: MACV J3-32)

1. The implementation of two unilateral plans (US and Vietnamese) and the lack of detailed coordination between the two forces presented a few problems in execution. Both the US and Vietnamese complained of interference and lack of cooperation by the other. This included not only masking of fire by friendly elements and unilateral actions taken without the knowledge or understanding of the other but extended to integration and exploitation of intelligence. The publishing of a combined defense plan should eliminate or minimize these problems.

m. The attack required daring. The enemy force was adequately trained and armed for the mission. However, the defense line and close-in security which had been established by the US Air Force, and which was not known by the enemy, disrupted the attack and caused its failure. The prompt positioning of reaction forces prevented the escape of much of the attacking force.

5. (C) RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that:

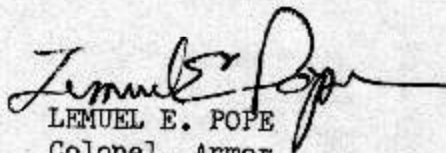
(1) Actions on recommendations made as a result of the 13 April attack be completed as soon as possible.

(2) Combined rehearsals of the defense plan be conducted frequently.

(3) Action be taken to increase the creditability of intelligence reports.

4 Incls

1. TAB 1 - Maps with Overlay (TAB 1a)
2. TAB 2 - Sketch Map (Tan Son Nhut Airfield)
3. TAB 3 - Results
4. TAB 4 - Sources


LEMUEL E. POPE
Colonel, Armor
Senior Advisor

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TAB 3 (Results) to Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66

RESULTS

a. US and Free World Forces

(1) Killed in action.

(a) USAF - 3

(b) ARVN - 3

(2) Missing in action: None

(3) Wounded in action:

(a) USAF - 15

(b) ARVN - 9

(4) Aircraft destroyed: None

(5) Aircraft damaged:

(a) Major (Requiring depot level maintenance)

<u>T YPE</u>	<u>MAN HOURS</u>	<u>REPAIR COST</u>	<u>SUB-TOTAL</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
RF-101C	1,900	\$4,200.00		
CH-3C	135	10,500.00		
RC-47	600	2,680.00	\$17,380.00	

(b) Minor

RF-4C	144	820.00		
RF-101C	288	6,755.00		
RF-101C	22	2,800.00		
CH-3C	16	3,150.00		
CH-3C	150	1,400.00		
RB-57	366	11,500.00		
RB-57	96	2,800.00		
RC-47	24	5,250.00		

PAGE 1 4 PAGES
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RC-47	18	1,560.00		
RC-47	16	3,500.00		
RC-47	11	2,800.00	\$12,335.00	(Air Force) \$59,715.00
NC-121J	40	120.00*		
NC-121J	10	30.00*		
SP-2H	85	255.00*		
SP-2H	85	255.00*		
SP-2H	85	255.00*		
SP-2H	<u>1,200</u>	<u>3,600.00*</u>		(USN) <u>\$4,515.00</u>
TOTALS	5,290			\$61,230.00

(*NOTE: Dollar computation of damaged US Navy aircraft is based upon estimated number of man-hours to repair only and does not include cost of materials).

(6) Facilities/material damaged/destroyed.

(a) MD-3 Engine Driver Generator Set, destroyed.
Cost factor is \$15,650.00.

(b) MA-1A Gas Turbine Compressor, damaged. 144 man hours to repair at a cost of \$1,025.00.

(c) Vehicles

1 USAF, 1 1/2 ton, destroyed

2 USAF, Pickup, destroyed

3 1 1/2 ton, destroyed

4 USAF, Pickup, destroyed

5 USAF, Pickup, destroyed

6 ARVN, 3/4 ton destroyed

7 ARVN, 1/4 ton damaged

8 ARVN, 2 1/2 ton damaged

(d) Weapons

1 US

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PAGE 2 OF 4 PAGES
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- a M-16, 5.56MM, Rifle - destroyed
- b Two M-16, 5.56MM, Rifle - damaged
- c M-16, 5.56MM, Rifle - lost

2 ARVN

- a Four M1 Carbine - lost
- b Two M1 Rifles - lost

(e) Radios

- 1 One Motorola UH3 HHT 1130E mobile radio unit with accessories destroyed.
- 2 One Motorola Portable Handy-Talkie lost.

(f) Miscellaneous

- 1 One each pair Cannon Binoculars, 7 x 50 lost.
- 2 Very minor Structural damage from shock.

b. Enemy.

- (1) Killed in action 30
- (2) Captured - 5
- (3) Equipment and Materiel losses.

(a) Weapons

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>TYPE</u>
8	SKS Carbines (Chicom type 56, 7.62mm)
5	AK Submachine guns (Chicom type 57, 7.62mm assault rifle)
4	VC Type B-4C Anti-tank grenade launchers (Chicom type 56, USSR Model)
2	US M-79 grenade launchers
1	CKC Rifle
1	Machine Pistol (Chicom type 50, 7.62mm)

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PAGE 3 OF 4 PAGES
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(b) Munitions

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>TYPE</u>
1	VC type 7Kg Directional Mine (Claymore)
10	VC type B-40 Anti-tank grenades (Chicom type 56, USSR Model RPG-2) with eight propellant charges
10	Bangalore Torpedoes
6	US 60MM Mortar rounds with 5 fuses
2	Chicom RKG-3T Anti-tank grenades (USSR Model RKG-3)
2	Chicom type 1/M-33 Frag grenades
5	Chicom type M-32 Frag grenades
41	VC Homemade blast grenades (Resembles OD Pork and Beans Can)
44	VC Stick type blast grenades
35	US 40MM rifle grenades (All removed from VC KIA)
2	US M-26 Frag grenades (dud fired)
1	US Mk III offensive grenade (Removed from VC KIA)
6	9MM small arms clips-approximately 40 rds/clip
41	7.62 small arms clips-approximately 30 rds/clip
130	9MM loose rounds (approximated)
260	8.62MM loose rounds (approximated)

c. Civilians

Killed - 4

Injured - 2

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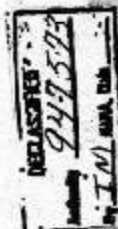
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TAF 4 (Sources) to Combat After Action Report - Attack on Tan Son Nhut 4 Dec 66

SOURCES

1. (U) Combat Operations After Action Report, Tan Son Nhut, AB, RVN, 4 December 1966, RCS: MACV J3-32 (U), Headquarters, 377th Combat Support Group (MACAF), dated 25 December 1966.
2. (U) Report No. 156/BKTD/P3/HQ/M Headquarters Capital Military District, Subject: VC Attack on Tan Son Nhut Airbase Night between 3 - 4 December 1966, dated 10 December 1966.
3. (U) Report No. 0733/YKTSN/R3/H/K, Headquarters Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area, Subject: Attack on Tan Son Nhut Airbase Night between 3 - 4 December 1966 by VC, dated 7 December 1966.
4. (U) Report No. 1030/BCH/TO2CV/HQ/K, Headquarters 2d Service Battalion Subject: VC Attack, Infiltration, and Mortaring on TSN Airbase, Engagement between 2d Platoon/3 and VC element, and Pursuit Operation, dated 7 December 1966.
5. (U) Memorandum for Record, Headquarters Special Troops, USAFV, Subject: After Action Report of VC Attack on TSN, 3 - 4 December 1966, dated 19 December 1966.
6. (U) Letter, Wallace N. Morgan, Major USAF, CDB PAC, Subject: Viet Cong Attack on Tan Son Nhut, undated.
7. (U) Memorandum for Record, G3, CDB Advisory Detachment, Subject: DIRECTLY Participation in the Defense of TSN/AB 4 December 1966, dated 8 December 1966.
8. (U) Memorandum for Record, G3, CDB Advisory Detachment, Subject: 173d Avn Co Gunship Participation in Defense of TSN/AB on 4 December 1966, dated 9 December 1966.
9. (U) Statements of Major James S. Cronen and Captain Gerry Z. Gipson, 120th Aviation Company concerning participation of that unit in the defense of Tan Son Nhut Airfield on 4 December.
10. (U) After Action Report, Senior Advisor, 53d Regional Force Battalion, dated 10 December 1966.
11. (U) After Action Report, Senior Advisor, 2d Service Battalion, subject: Report of VC Attack on TSN Airbase 4 December 1966, undated.
12. (U) Report, Ranger Command Advisory Detachment, Subject: Combat After Action Report, dated 6 December 1966.
13. (U) Letter, Senior Advisor, Go Vap Sub-sector, Subject: Dong Tam Hamlet #3 Incident Report, dated 4 December 1966.



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14. (U) Letter, Senior Advisor, Co Van Sub-sector, Subject: Disposition of Forces, dated 7 December 1966.

15. (U) Letter, Senior Advisor, Hoc Mon Sub-sector, Subject: Hoc Mon Sub-sector Participation in Tan Son Nhut Airbase Incident 4 December 1966, dated 8 December 1966.

16. (U) CTD Advisory TOC Log.

17. (U) Extract of Gio Dinh Sector Advisory Team TOC Log for period 04001 - 042400 December 1966.

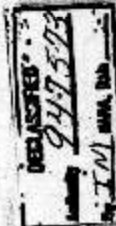
18. (U) Tan Son Nhut Sensitive Area Advisory Team TOC Log for period 031700 - 051515 December 1966.

19. (U) Capital Military District Advisory Team TOC Log.



PHOTOGRAPHIC CAPTION SHEET

1. An Air Police Quick Reaction Force is briefed in preparation for a search-and-destroy operation.
2. A search-and-destroy team prepares to begin a sweep while hand-grenades are passed out.
3. Searching in and around construction zone. Note the deep drainage canal.
4. The search continues through recently excavated land and deep canals. Obstacles to the air police search team provided excellent cover and concealment for the VC in their penetration and withdrawal moves.
5. Two feet of water and mud, steep banks, and dense growth combine to make the search operation slow and hazardous.
6. A panoramic view of a portion of the search-and-destroy area of operation reveals the dense jungle-like growth of weeds and bushes. These air policemen are searching a grave yard overgrown with weeds and shrubs.
7. Air Police advancing into 5 - 6 foot bushes and jungle growth which afford excellent coverage and hiding places for the VC.
8. Air Police search-and-destroy operation continues. Note the height and density of the vegetation.
9. Tall thick elephant grass on the banks of canals is a formidable obstacle to a search-and-destroy operation.
10. A lull in the search permits an Air Policeman to check the clearance of his M-16 barrel after traversing muddy terrain.
11. Viet Cong killed in action. Note the simulated leg wound on the farthest body.
12. Viet Cong killed in action. Note the variety of civilian clothing, including the distinctive black pajama pants of the VC.
13. Viet Cong killed in action.
14. An Air Police officer inspects the body of the last VC killed in



action. Note the tall thick growth in which this VC was able to conceal himself for an extended period of time.

15. Captured VC weapons and ammunition.
16. Captured VC weapons and ammunition. Note the US M-79 grenade launcher and the US handgrenade.
17. Captured VC weapons, ammunition, and grenades. Note the M-79 ammunition.
18. Air Police truck hit by VC B-40 Anti-tank (Chicom type 56, USSR Model). Note the fins of the exploded grenade in the foreground.
19. ^{LEFT} ~~Right~~ rear view of the truck in photograph 18, above.
20. Damage sustained by US Navy aircraft (SP-2H).
21. A sample of small arms/fragmentation damage sustained by several aircraft.
22. Captured VC 7Kg Directional mine (Claymore).
23. MD-1 Power Unit destroyed by fire in aircraft revetment after being struck by exploding grenade or mortar fragments.
24. VC mortar position on Tan Son Nhut Air Base, 330 meters west of 07-25 runway. Note empty 60 mm shipping containers, food tin, clothing, and especially dirt bank used for cover/concealment.
25. Satchel charges and explosives removed from ammunition revetment on 6 Dec 66. Note the watch used for a timer.
26. Close-up view of satchel charges.



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