

WAR DOG RETIRED



Nemo, whelped in October 1962, was procured by the Air Force when he was one and a half years old. After completing an 8-week training course, he was assigned to Fairchild AFB, WA. In January 1966, Nemo was transferred to the Republic of South Vietnam with a large group of other dogs. Airman Robert A Thorneburg was assigned as Nemo's handler in July 1966.

In the predawn hours of 4 December 1966, Tan Son Nhut Air Base was attacked by a large force of Viet Cong commando raiders. Once inside the base, the raiders divided into small groups to attack their targets. Several sentry dog teams stationed on preventive perimeter posts gave the initial alert and warning almost simultaneously. As a result of this early warning, security forces of the 377th Air Police Squadron successfully repelled the attack. Although wounded, one dog handler maintained contact with the enemy and notified Central Security Control of their location and direction of travel. Two security policemen in a machine gun bunker were ready and waiting as the VC approached the main aircraft parking ramp. In a few seconds they stopped the enemy, killing all thirteen of the attackers. Security forces rapidly deployed around the perimeter and prevented numerous infiltrators from escaping, forcing them to hide in a Vietnamese graveyard, dense vegetation, and walls. Search patrols believed that all remaining VC were killed or captured the following morning. Just before total darkness, Airman Thorneburg and Nemo were posted, Nemo alerted and was released to attack the VC who had evaded earlier detection. Both handler and dog were wounded, but not before killing at least one VC. Nemo's injuries included the loss of one eye. Using additional sentry dog teams, the security forces located and killed four more VC. Additional dog teams discovered four more VC who were hiding underground. They too were killed.

Nemo was credited with saving his handler's life and preventing further destruction of life and property. On 23 June 1967, Headquarters, USAF, directed that Nemo be returned to the United States as the first sentry dog officially retired from active service. His permanent retirement kennel was located at the Department of Defense Dog Center, Lackland AFB, Texas. He was frequently taken on tours in the United States to assist in procurement of military working dogs until his death in 1971.

COMPLIMENTS OF

475TH SECURITY POLICE SQUADRON

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