



SHORT BURSTS

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Bien Hoa AB, RVN

SECURITY POLICE STOP VC

A gritty group of men from the 3rd Security Police Squadron and augmentees who were manning a 20-year-old French bunker thwarted Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces attempting to infiltrate Bien Hoa Air Base Jan 31.

They manned Bunker Hill 10, the first outpost to notice the oncoming enemy, and for seven hours bore the brunt of the attack. Augmented by a quick reaction force of 15 men, the bunker's normal crew of four repulsed numerous attacks on their position and withstood 12 B-40 rocket hits.

"The infiltrators consisted of 300 to 350 VC and NVA troops," said Captain Martin E. Strones, of the Security Police Squadron. "The enemy couldn't take the bunker and had to bypass it. This let us hit them with intense crossfire. The crossfire pinned them down and slowed down their penetration. This kept them from gaining access to other areas on base," he said.

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

BIEN HOA HAS, IN THE PAST FEW DAYS, WITHSTOOD ITS GREATEST TRIAL. WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO REBOUND FROM THE ENEMY ATTACK BECAUSE OF ONLY ONE THING — YOU, THE MEN OF BIEN HOA. YOUR COURAGE IN BEATING BACK THE ATTACKERS, YOUR DETERMINATION TO DIG OUT AND GET ON WITH THE MISSION, YOUR WILLINGNESS TO WORK UNTIL THE JOB IS DONE, HAVE ENABLED US TO HIT THE ENEMY HARD. WE HAVE FLOWN MORE MISSIONS IN THE PAST FEW DAYS THAN IN ANY OTHER COMPARABLE PERIOD.

YOU CAN BE PROUD OF YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS, BOTH INDIVIDUALLY AND AS A BASE. I AM PROUD TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT I COULD BE ASSOCIATED WITH NO FINER GROUP OF MEN DURING A PERIOD OF DURESS.

GEORGE W. MCLAUGHLIN, COL, USAF
Commander

MAIL MOVING

Despite the rocket and mortar attack on Bien Hoa Jan 31, the mail has gone through thanks to the coordinated efforts of OLL505, USAF PAC Postal-Courier Region and the men of the 12th Air Commando Squadron and Det 6, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

On Feb 1, First Lieutenant Larry L. Henry, postal detachment commander, moved all outgoing letter mail from Bien Hoa to Tan Son Nhut aboard HH-43 helicopters of Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. Kavanaugh's rescue detachment. The same means were used until Feb 3, when the UC-123s of Lieutenant Colonel Donald S. Stewart's 12th Air Commando Squadron took over the mail run.

With the larger UC-123s all mail can be moved into and out of Bien Hoa.

"We'll work 24-hours-a-day to keep the mail moving, because we know what a morale factor mail is to everyone at this time,"

Bunker Hill 10, made of concrete, resembles a miniature fort. It was reinforced with sandbags. It guards the east end of the runway and east barracks.

"The VC hit the bunker with machine gun fire from three sides and then fired rockets. A rocket killed an officer and wounded several men inside. Although deafened by the noise, the men fought on," the captain said.

"The main machine gun position was knocked out by a rocket, so the men inside launched 40 mm grenades at the advancing enemy. Sergeant Marshall A. Gott, who was in the bottom of the bunker, went topside and out of the corner of his eye saw a VC trying to overtake them. He reacted immediately by snapping his M-16 on automatic and spraying the area. Gott stayed on top of the bunker until ordered to leave. Even then he left reluctantly," Strones related.

"The bunker soon started to run out of ammo, but one of our drivers, Staff Sergeant William Piazza, heard they were in trouble and drove through enemy fire to resupply them. This made it possible for them to hold out.

"Another hero of the battle was Staff Sergeant Larry H. Sawyer, leader of a quick reaction force, who braved fire to reach the bunker. He got there, loaded the wounded into a jeep, evacuated them through enemy fire and then returned with more ammo and supplies," Strones recalled. "There is no doubt in my mind that Bunker Hill 10 bore the brunt of the VC attack. It was sort of like the Alamo out there. The men refused to give up. They had a spirit, even when completely surrounded, that the enemy could not break."