



**Assault on the  
American Embassy  
TET 1968**

Forward By SSG (Ret) Thomas L. Johnson

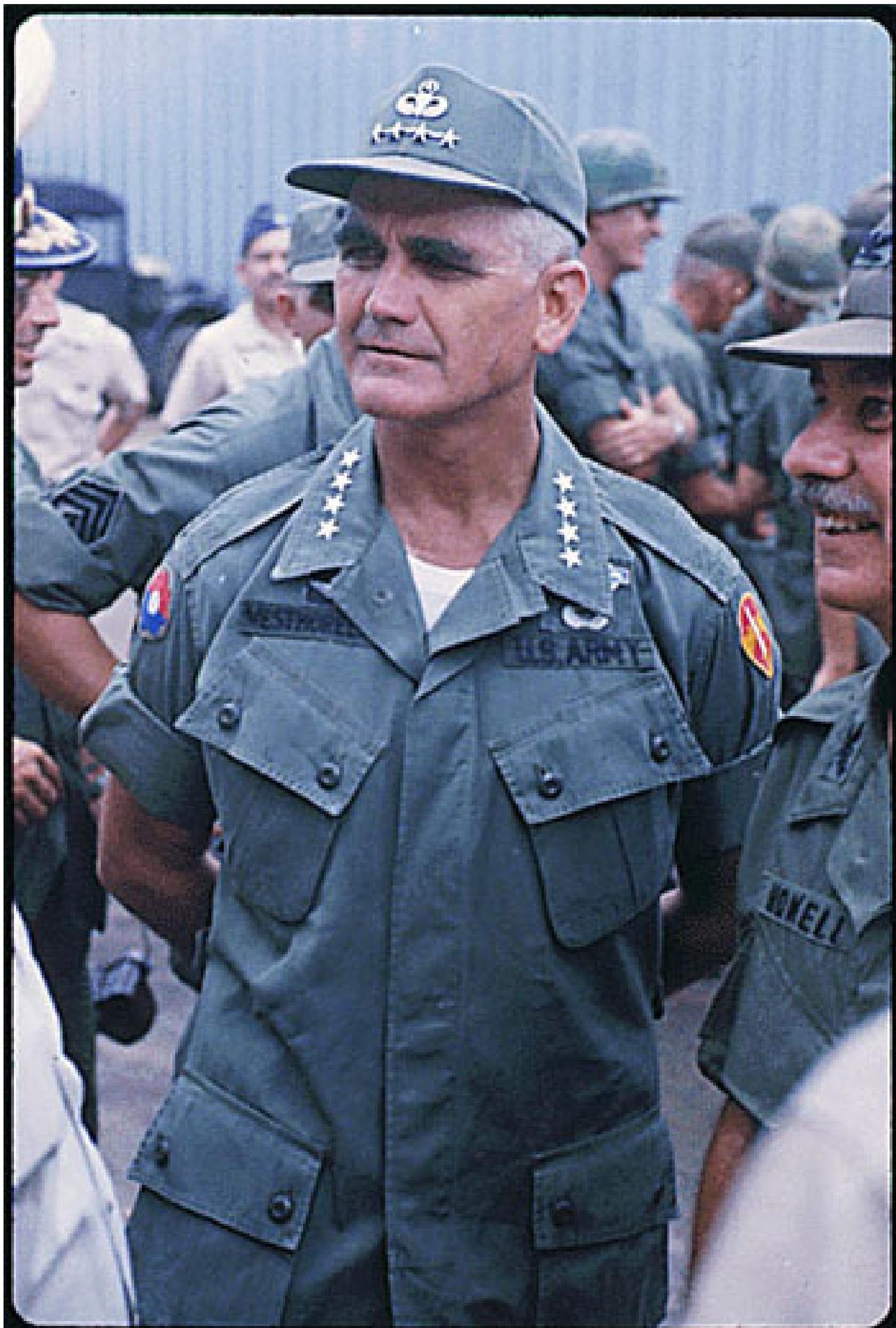
Thirty-Eight years ago, the events that are depicted within this historical manuscript took place in the City of Saigon, Republic of Vietnam. In March of 1983 this manuscript was published by the United States Army Military Police Corps after over 3 years of extensive research and interviews of the participants in this pivotal battle. It is now Twenty-Three years since this manuscript was initially published and additional information has come to light over these years. My post military career has taken many different turns from a career in Law Enforcement in which I have retired as a Chief of Police to being the Chief of Staff for a major Construction Company. As I have reviewed what I wrote these many years ago, I can see that it would be a dishonor not to update this manuscript with the latest information. In this manuscript I will attempt to complete this story which if it were a screenplay, people would say it could never have happened. To those brothers in arms who fought this unpopular war and to the Military Policeman and Marines who wrote this chapter in American History, I dedicate this effort.

Thomas L. "Egor" Johnson

Staff Sergeant (Retired)

Wichita, Kansas

February 18, 2006





TO: The U.S Army Military Police Museum:  
With admiration to the Corps!  
W. C. [Signature]

Forward By

General William C. Westmoreland, U.S. Army Retired

The History of the Battle at the American Embassy – TET 1968

The History of the U.S. Army Military Police Corps contains many proud chapters, but there are none more distinguished than the performance of the U.S. Army Military Policemen in the Capital City of Saigon during the TET Offensive of 1968. As the Commander of the American Military Forces in South Vietnam at the time, I was truly impressed with the versatility of our Military Policemen and their demonstrated valor during that critical engagement. Members of the Military Police Corps were called upon to fight numerous skirmishes in Saigon, each of which had a direct bearing on the rapid defeat of the enemy. Though usually outnumbered, they were victorious.

I am honored to salute the U.

S. Military Police Defenders of Saigon who embodied the motto of the Corps, “Of the Troops – For the Troops”.

William C. Westmoreland

General, U.S. Army Retired



Brigadier General Albin F. Irzyk presenting medals to Cpl James Helper's Family

Forward for  
Historical Account of the Military Police Corps Regiment  
Assault on the American Embassy, TET 1968

By  
Brigadier General Albin F. Irzyk

Saigon was a teeming metropolis. It was a wide-open city, with jammed streets and a most heterogeneous population. The "Pearl of the Orient" was a fascinating, complex, dangerous city. Within its confines were Viet Cong who moved surreptitiously causing damage

and unrest. When least expected, huge rockets landed and exploded within the city. Saigon had every problem of a big, crowded city and many more unique to itself. To police it was a nightmare. To complicate matters even further it was in a combat zone.

Among the Saigon millions were thousands of Americans living and working there, on leave, or passing through—military, diplomats, civilian workers, members of the media.

To the American Military Policemen on duty in this city, no spot on earth provided a greater challenge. Police work here was sensitive, demanding, complex, dangerous—many aspects completely without precedent. With dedication and professionalism the Military Policeman met the challenge.

Then, during the first hours of 31 January 1968, that challenge hurdled and soared to a tremendously new dimension. Suddenly it was no longer police work, it was combat—hand to hand combat with a tenacious, slippery, ruthless, suicidal, un-uniformed enemy! That combat initially centered around the defense of U.S. soil and property, the symbol of America—The United States Embassy.

American M.P.'s courageously and successfully defended the Embassy as described in this detailed, accurate, unique and professional work that is a classic.

For many, many hours after the battle for the Embassy, the M.P.'s together with the limited reaction forces of the U.S. Army Headquarters Area Command, under whom they operated, fought the battle of Saigon. They were the front-line troops, the only fighting troops in the city until U.S. combat elements began arriving and Vietnamese Police and military finally began to gather themselves.

I had the privilege and honor rarely accorded a non-M.P. Officer. I had Operational Command of the American Military Police forces in Saigon. Their performance as combat troopers can be described in only the most glowing superlatives.

I know that the Military Police Corps throughout its history has had many glorious moments and outstanding achievements. However, I am convinced that the finest hour of the U.S. Military Police Corps began on 31 January 1968 and lasted throughout the TET attack on Saigon. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been a part of that history.

My military career was full and rewarding but one of its highlights has to be my association with the U.S. Military Police in Saigon—an experience in which I take great pride and which I will always cherish and treasure.

I offer my warm, sincere and hearty congratulations to SSG Thomas L. Johnson and Mary R. Himes, the authors of this historical account, for depicting so carefully, painstakingly, accurately and dramatically the actions at the Embassy.

This work will be a lasting tribute to the gallant Military Policemen who fought and died so courageously on the grounds of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon in 1968.

Albin F. Irzyk

Brig. Gen. U.S.A. (Ret.)



Forward By

Colonel Richard E. George, MPC, (Retired)

In the Battle for Saigon during the Viet Cong TET Offensive, beginning January 31, 1968, the Military Police were called upon to perform a myriad of missions, many of which they were not properly equipped for. Their missions ran the gamut from rescue of billets under siege; assuming holding or blocking positions to thwart or blunt concentrated Viet Cong attacks; performing reconnaissance missions within the fifty square mile area of the city to determine Viet Cong presence or strength; escorting US combat units who were moving through the city; to the re-capture of the US Embassy compound (no Viet Cong were able to enter the main Embassy building). Of the twenty Viet Cong involved in the attack on our Embassy, Nineteen were killed and the Twentieth was wounded and Captured.

The Two Major Viet Cong Errors were their failure to attack and eliminate both the Provost Marshal Compound and the 716<sup>th</sup> Battalion Headquarters. Much to our surprise, they attacked neither. Elimination of the Provost Marshal Compound with its Military Police Net Control would have neutralized or severely hampered control of the command's eyes and ears. The elimination or, at a minimum, application of severe pressure on the 716<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion Headquarters would have severely hampered them from forming and dispatching the Military Police Reaction Forces, as directed by the Provost Marshal's Office, that were so vital to the defense of Saigon. In the final analysis, it was the Military Police Reaction Forces that spelled disaster for the Viet Cong venture in Saigon. When the Viet Cong, Captained in the Saigon area, were questioned about the first resistance they encountered, almost to a man they replied, "The MP's". If either the Provost Marshal Compound or the Battalion Headquarters had been eliminated, the outcome of the Battle of Saigon might well have been drastically altered.

The Battle for Saigon was probably the largest independent Military Police Combat Operation in the history of the Corps. Within the first Twelve hours, we suffered 27 killed and 44 wounded, a terrible price to pay. At first, we all thought we were facing the usual, isolated terrorist activity; no one realized the magnitude of the attack. It was during this first hour or so that we suffered our heaviest casualties. Both the 716<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion and the 90<sup>th</sup> Military Police Detachment (PM) were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation and individual

awards included on Distinguished Service Cross, One Silver Star, 89 Bronze Stars, 71 Purple Hearts, and 64 Army Commendation Medals.

The nation and all US Personnel, both military and civilian, assigned to the Saigon Area owe these brave, unselfish and dedicated Military Policemen a debt of gratitude. Had it not been for their sacrifice, US casualties would have been staggering. Robert L. Pisor, reporter for the Detroit News, in an article entitled “Saigon’s Fighting MP’s” published in April, 1968 issue of the Army Magazine, said: “An MP Battalion turns from routine police duties to fighting as infantry during the TET Offensive, covering itself and its parent arm with glory”. These brave men won a costly change of image for the Military Police, on for which all past, present and future members of the Military Police Corps can justifiably point to with pride and humility - - for this was indeed the Corps’ Finest Hour.

Richard E. George

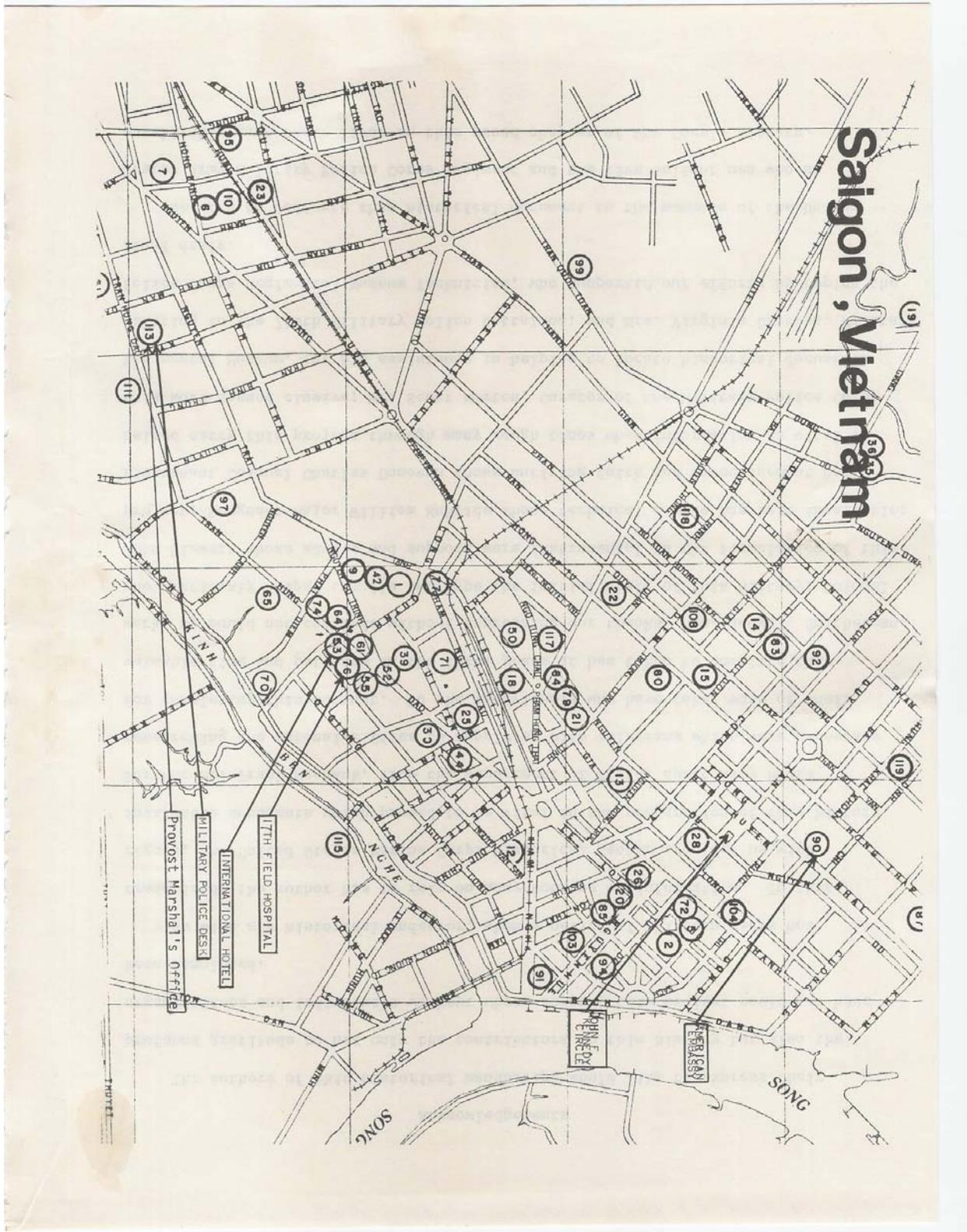
Colonel, MPC, US Army (Retired)

## Acknowledgements

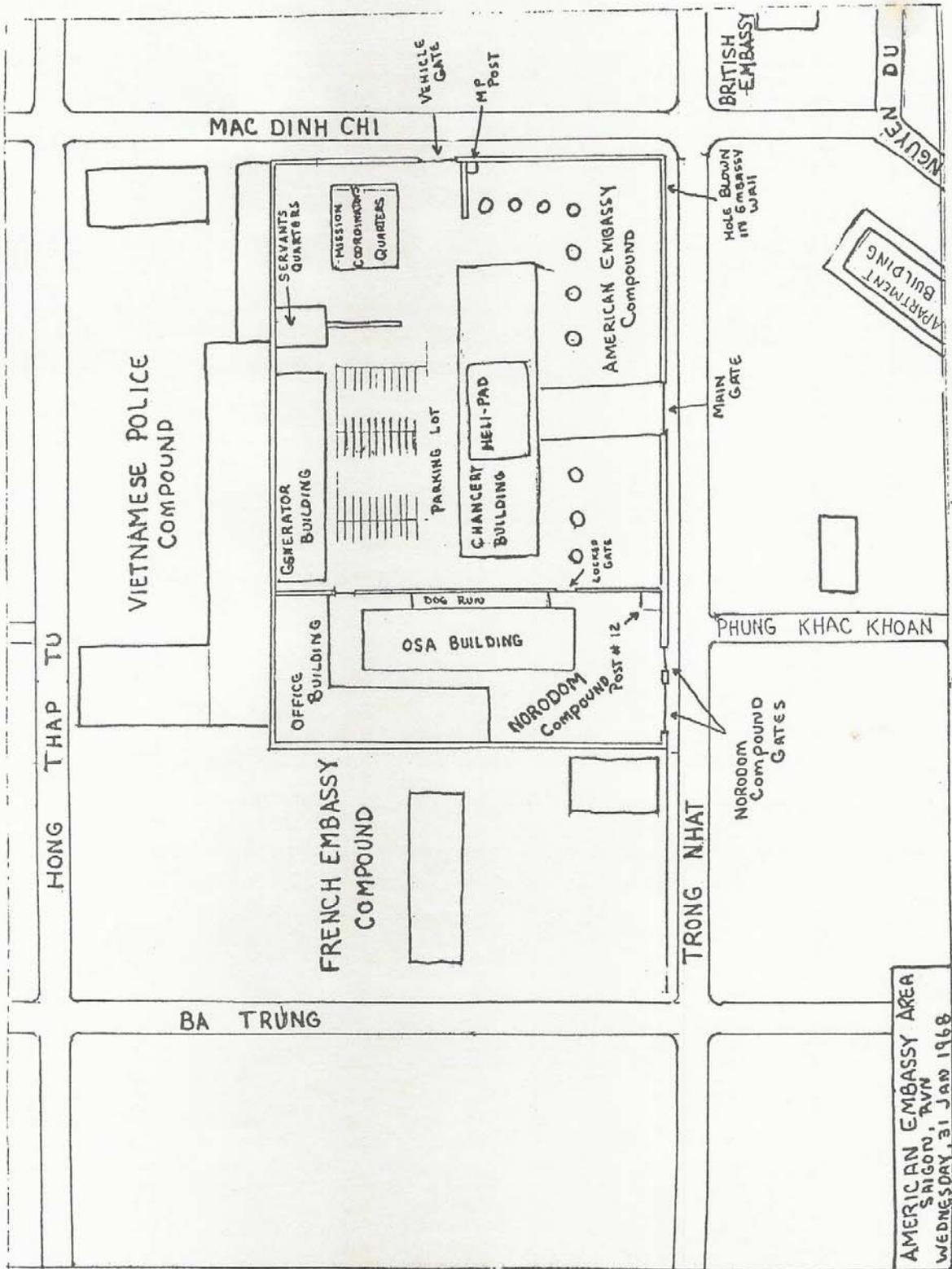
The author of this historical manuscript would like to express their profound gratitude to not only the contributors to this history, but also the organizations and individuals without whose support this project could not have been completed.

As with any historical endeavor, when a period of thirteen years, (at the time of the initial manuscript), has transpired, the author has to rely on many sources of information. In this regard, the United States Marine Corps Historical Center provided me with invaluable documents which proved to be vital in the preparation of this history. Further Mr. Frank Machank, from the Department of State, spent many hours researching the extensive files of the State Department to supply me with telegrams which were necessary for completing this account. To the individuals who have taken much of their valuable time and patience in the three years it has taken to complete the initial work, and I would be remiss if I did not recognize the contribution and thanks of : Mrs. Judy T. Smitherman who graciously helped compile and type the initial draft of this history; Colonel John Blewett, MPC whose advice and support was instrumental in the formulation of this project; Sergeant Major William McBride who technical advice has been invaluable; LTC Charles Donovan, MPC whose untiring faith and encouragement has helped carry this project through many rough times when information so vital to this work seemed elusive; Mr. Scott Norton, Curator of the Military Police Corps Regimental Museum for his assistance in locating historical documents relating to the 716<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion; Mrs. Virginia Crossen, Military Police Corps Museum Technician, who supported my efforts by typing the initial final draft; Colonel Thomas W. Hill, my friend and Commander in Dust Off for this support in this effort; and Mrs. Mary R. Himes who assisted me in editing the initial manuscript and ensuring it was accepted by the Military Police Corps as a part of the Corps History.

I wish to dedicate this historical document to the members of the U.S. Army Military Police Corps, The U.S. Marine Corps Security Detachment and the five valiant men who so unselfishly gave their lives in the proud chapter of United States History.









Ariel View of the United States Embassy – Saigon, Vietnam

## CHAPTER 1 – Prelude to Battle

The events which unfolded, beginning in the early morning hours of January 31, 1968, in the capital city of Saigon, South Vietnam, has written a proud chapter in the history of the United States Army Military Police Corps and that of the United States Marine Corps. The valor, resourcefulness, dedication to duty, and ability to make decisions proved a determining factor in the successful engagement of a very persistent enemy, who was bent on the capture of the capital city of Saigon. It was during the first critical seventy-two hours, the Military Police defending Saigon have been credited with insuring that the major goal, deposing the South Vietnamese government and capturing the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff, was totally defeated and the in fact no major enemy objective was taken by the enemy forces. The ability of Military Policemen to effectively utilize reaction forces, consisting of not more than a reinforced squad to counter enemy thrusts throughout the city, has demonstrated the value of the Military Policeman as a member of the combat team.

As with any major combat offensive, the Battle of Saigon was to begin months earlier when the North Vietnamese Government came to believe that the South Vietnamese population would support a popular uprising to overthrow the South Vietnamese Government. This belief was further enhanced by the Presidential Election in the fall of 1967 when then President Nguyen Van Thieu received only thirty-four percent of the popular vote, while the runner up candidate Truong Dinh Dzu received seventeen percent of the vote with his platform of restoring peace and ending the war. This event is significant when it is realized that ten candidates were in the election for President.<sup>1</sup>

### GENERAL NGUYEN CHI THANH

Political Commissar in the Southern Battlefield

“In October 1964, the Politburo assigned General Nguyen Chi Thanh, member of the Politburo and deputy secretary of the Party Central Committee’s Military Commission to work as a political commissar in the southern battlefield.

Assessing the enemy in 1965, General Nguyen Chi Thanh said: “That the US has sent nearly 200,000 expeditionary troops to Vietnam in 1965 means that the US has confessed that 500,000

puppet troops were unable to encounter with the people's war in the south. It also means that the people's war in the south has defeated the US 'special war' of the US in the period when the US used its puppet troops as its mainstay."

From a question: How could the southern people and soldiers defeat hundreds of thousands of US troops? General Nguyen Chi Thanh made a deep analysis and stressed that we could do it with the following reasons:

1. The US troops were well-equipped and had good food but they were on the defensive after nine months' fighting with the liberation fighters in Van Tuong, Play Me, Da Nang, Chu Lai, Bau Bang, Dau Tieng, Dat Cuoc and Bien Hoa. So, it was easy to understand why the US troops suffered defeats in several first combats.

2. The US army had many combined military corps and services with a lot of mobile means. However, at first, their spirit was weak; secondly, the people's war and the armed forces in the south were better than the US troops in terms of fighting spirit, higher commanding level, military art, strategic command and tactics; thirdly, in a battlefield like the south's, the training and way of fighting of US troops were not suitable; therefore, the US ground troops could not avoid being mired in passivity.

3. The US's command faced a series of instable issues such as whether a strategy of lightning attacks or long fighting was approved and what was the suitable tactics? The American generals were hesitant of strategy. The US troops launched some counter-attacks but failed. It proved that the US underwent a crisis of strategy and tactics. Therefore, although the US increased its troops, they could not avoid failure because of a strategic impasse.

General Nguyen Chi Thanh's analyses helped create confidence for the people and soldiers in the south to advance, determined to defeat the American aggressors.

Assessing the enemy's one million troops' combat ability, General Thanh said: "Despite the enemy's rise in the number of troops and war facilities, their fighting efficiency was not raised because of their failure in using the right tactics."

With the best understanding of the enemy and good assessment of the enemy, the Southern Command took the initiative in making plans and taking timely action, thus smashing two big strategic counter-attacks of the enemy. The enemy's defeat from 1965 to 1967 was the defeat of the initial period of the "local war" strategy and, at the same time, it created an important turning point of the war."<sup>78</sup>

A major factor in development of the plans for the ill-fated TET Offensive unfolded in July of 1967 when General Thanh was fatally wounded during a B-52 strike against his headquarters in Cambodia, thus depriving the North Vietnamese of the one commander that understood the challenging of American firepower the best. Due to the combat losses being sustained without positive gains by the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong units, General Vo Nguyen Giap, the North Vietnamese Minister of Defense, and others in the North Vietnamese Government made a decision to change strategy to one of challenging the immense allied firepower. With the death of General Thanh, the North Vietnamese Government decided to attempt one massive offensive that would turn into a popular uprising and thus win the war.<sup>2</sup>



General Vo Nguyen Giap

MID-MORNING, TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 1968

Office of Brigadier General Albin F. Irzyk

Saigon Area Commander

Brigadier General Albin F. Irzyk received a phone call from General William C. Westmoreland informing him of the intelligence estimate which supported General Westmoreland's belief that there were currently Viet Cong Sapper units within the city of Saigon. General Westmoreland further stated that he believed these units would begin attacks against installations within the Saigon area during the next forty-eight hours.

General Irzyk immediately contacted LTC Richard E. George, the Saigon Area Provost Marshal, and LTC Gordon D. Rowe, Commander, 716<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion and had them report to his office. As soon as LTC George and LTC Rowe arrived at his headquarters, he briefed them on the information General Westmoreland had given him and instructed them to "get their people ready". While this meeting was taking place, General Irzyk's staff were sending the alert messages to all units under his command.

HEADQUARTERS, 716<sup>TH</sup> MILITARY POLICE BATTALION

1300 hours, Tuesday, January 30, 1968

LTC Rowe upon returning from General Irzyk's Headquarters, immediately called an emergency meeting of his staff and all unit commanders for the purpose of briefing them on the developments and instructing the units to have an alert force standing by at all times. He further instructed his unit commanders that when a Reaction Force was dispatched, another force, with an officer standing by, was to be organized within an hour. All building security plans were also to be immediately implemented

## SAIGON AREA PROVOST MARSHAL'S OFFICE

1330 hours, Tuesday, January 30, 1968

Upon his return from General Irzyk's headquarters, LTC George instructed his Staff to have all walking patrols become motorized from 1800 (6 PM) to 0800 (8 AM) and Car 41 (Joint Patrol with the Vietnamese Policeman) to have a Military Policeman replace the Vietnamese Military Policeman assigned to that patrol. In addition, the Headquarters Area Command Compound, Armed Forces Radio and Television Station, Headquarters Military Assistance Command Compound, and the WACO Military Police Net Control Station were to have an additional Military Police Post manned from 1800 hours to 0800 hours daily. The S-3 then issued these commitments to the S-3 (Plans and Operations Section) of the 716<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion.



Military Police Guard Post



MP near International Hotel – Saigon, Vietnam

HEADQUARTERS, 716<sup>TH</sup> MILITARY POLICE BATTALION

1415 hours, Tuesday, January 30, 1968

The S-1 instructed the Battalion Communications Section to insure that two radio repair vehicles be on the road at all times, and that all personnel who manned these vehicles be armed, and that all personnel wore flack jackets as well as steel helmets. In addition to checking all PRC 10 and PRC 24 radios in order to insure their working condition and all communications personnel were to continuously monitor the WACO Military Police Communications Net Control Station at all times.<sup>4</sup>

## OFFICE OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICER

1600 hours, Tuesday, January 30, 1968

Captain Robert J. O'Brien, United States Marine Corps, the officer in charge of the Marine Security Guard Detachment, met with Mr. Leo Campsey, the State Department Regional Security Officer and was briefed on the possibility of a Viet Cong attack in the Saigon Area. In response to this meeting, Captain. O'Brien directed that a second Marine Guard be posted at all one man posts and that a roof top watch be initiated on the new American Embassy. He then obtained a radio equipped sedan from the Embassy Motor Pool and made sure that the sedan had the capability of transmitting on Dragon Net, (the Marine Security Guard Net).

### UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

2330 hours, Tuesday, January 30, 1968

Captain. O'Brien began inspecting the Marine Detachments security posts with Sergeant Richard O. Frattarelli at 2300 hours. Their route took them to Ambassador Ellsworth Bunkers Quarters, then to Ambassador Robert W. Komer's home and ending up at the United States Embassy. The entire evening had been very quiet and the streets empty as they made their rounds. They had arrived at the Embassy in time for shift change at 2400 hours. The new shift had arrived and with confidence Captain. O'Brien and Sergeant Frattarelli departed to make another tour of all guard posts and then returned to Marine House. Captain. O'Brien told Sergeant. Frattarelli to go to his room and get some sleep and that he would get him up at about 0300 hours for another tour. Captain. O'Brien then went into the movie room and laid down on the sofa.<sup>7</sup>

### UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0010 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Raymond P. Schuepfer and Lance Corporal James P. Wilson departed the main Embassy building for Post #12 located at Norodom Compound next to the Embassy Compound.

Norodom Compound was surrounded by a wall with a gate between the two compounds by Post #12 and a vehicle gate next to the parking area at the rear of the Embassy Compound. Sergeant Schuepfer had been designated as the roving patrol with the responsibility of checking the area on an hourly basis.<sup>6</sup>

#### GUARD POST #1- UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0200 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

At midnight Sergeant Ronald W. Harper assumed his duties at Guard Post #1 along with Corporal Zahuranic. At 0200 hours he decided to go to the roof of the Embassy to relieve Sergeant Rudy A. Soto for a short break. After relieving Sergeant. Soto, he made a tour of the roof checking the area around the Embassy roof. From this position he could see the area around the Embassy where everything appeared quiet with no activity observable. At 0215 hours, Sergeant. Soto returned to the roof of the Embassy Chancery Building and Sergeant. Harper returned to Guard Post #1 in the Embassy lobby.<sup>8</sup>

#### GUARD POST #12 – NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0235 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Schuepfer departed Guard Post #12 to make his rounds of the Norodom Compound and Embassy Compound, leaving Lance Corporal Wilson to remain at the post. At 0238 hours, Sergeant. Harper at Guard Post #1 decided to go to Guard Post #12 to see if Sergeant. Schuepfer and Lance Corporal Wilson needed coffee. He departed the Chancery building and proceeded toward the gate between the Embassy Compound and the Office of the Special Assistant. Arriving at the gate, Sergeant Harper found that he was unable to enter Norodom Compound as the gate had been secured from the Norodom Compound side. He then proceeded behind the Chancery Building and followed the path between the Office Building and the Office of the Special Assistant around to the front. Sergeant Harper then proceeded across the compound to Guard Post #12. At 0243 hours, Sergeant Harper met Sergeant Schuepfer, who was returning from his patrol of the Compound. Entering the guard shack with Sergeant

Schuepfer, Sergeant Harper began to pour a cup of coffee. He glanced toward the office building and observed a Vietnamese standing close by the building.

## CHAPTER 2 – Assault Begins

### GUARD POST #12 – NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0245 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Harper turned to ask Sergeant Schuepfer, if the Vietnamese was a guard when he heard the firing of AK-47's several deafening explosions. Dropping his cup of coffee, Sergeant Harper headed out on a dead run. As he left Post #12 he noticed that the Vietnamese was no where to be seen. Retracing his route from a few minutes before, as he rounded the corner of the Office Building, near the rear parking area, he noticed an Embassy Driver running toward the Generator Building. At the same time Sergeant Harper noticed another driver, in an Embassy sedan near the rear entrance of the Chancery Building, stretching from the front seat into the back in an attempt to get an object. As he was running toward the back door of the Chancery Building he looked toward the back Vehicle Gate and did not see the Military Policemen stationed there, but could hear firing coming from that area. He approached the Service Entrance and found that it was locked. Proceeding to the stairwell door and found that it was locked also. Sergeant Harper then ran to the Parking Lot entrance and found that it was still open. Entering the Chancery Building, he ran to the front Teak Door behind his post and secured it, and then to the Main Entrance where he pulled the Vietnamese Guard inside before locking the doors, insuring that no Viet Cong Sappers would be able to enter the building.

### BACK VEHICLE GATE – UNITED STATES EMBASSY COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0245 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

SP4th Class Charles L. Daniel and Private First Class William E. Sebast, Military Policeman from the 716<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion, were standing by the rear Vehicle Gate Guard Shack when the firing began. Immediately moving to the low wall beside the driveway they heard a loud explosion coming from across the compound toward the forward wall. Seeing that a hole had been blown in the wall, they began firing their M-16's in that direction and began receiving fire from that location. For the next several minutes they exchanged fire with the Viet

Cong attempting to enter the compound through the hole, when from their rear, a Vietnamese, (believed to be the Vietnamese that Sergeant Harper saw in the Embassy Sedan), opened fire, killing both SP4 Daniel and PFC Sebast. Of the greatest importance to the overall battle, the two leaders of the C-10 Viet Cong Sapper Squad were killed during this short battle as they were entering the Embassy Compound through the hole in the wall. This left the Viet Cong leaderless during the rest of the battle.<sup>79</sup> The gallant stand that these two Military Policemen accomplished in the opening minutes of this battle proved to be vital, for it allowed Sergeant Harper the time to secure the main entrance of the Chancery Building.

#### LOBBY – UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0251 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Harper had just completed locking the 6” Teakwood Main Entrance Doors and turned toward the Armory which was located in the next room, when the Main Entrance Doors was hit by a B-40 Rocket. The explosion spread shrapnel inside the lobby, wounding Sergeant Harper in the leg. Corporal Zahuranic, who had been sitting at the receptionist desk, talking on the telephone with Mr. E. Allen Wendt, the Embassy Duty Officer. Being knocked to the floor by the explosion, he received a much more serious shrapnel wound to the head and a broken leg. Corporal Zahuranic was bleeding heavily from his head wound and from his ear’s. Sergeant Harper, limped to the Armory, and grabbed his Beretta sub-machine gun, loading it, he rushed to the restroom, where he took a handful of paper towels, and returned to Corporal Zahuranic who had crawled to the armory by this time. By this time automatic weapons fire was being directed towards the lobby. He instructed Corporal Zahuranic to apply the towels to his head wound, Sergeant Harper, again braved the incoming fire to get a first aid kit located at Post #1. Upon his return, he found that Corporal Zahuranic was unconscious. He began applying First Aid to Corporal Zahuranic, a second B-40 Rocket was fired into the chancery lobby, striking the window at Post #1 and exploding. Neither Sergeant Harper or Corporal Zahuranic were injured by this explosion as they were protected by the Armory wall.

Making Corporal Zahuranic as comfortable as possible, Sergeant Harper entered the room adjacent to the lobby, contacted Mr. Wendt by telephone and briefed him on what had

happened. He requested help in evacuating Corporal Zahuranic to Mr. Wendt's location on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. A few minutes later, Mr. Wendt and Private First Class Charles Fisher (US Army) arrived at the lobby and assisted moving Corporal Zahuranic to the elevator. Sergeant Harper gave PFC Fisher a shotgun, a .38 caliber pistol, and a box of shotgun shells, and instructed him to move Corporal Zahuranic to Mr. Wendt's location, and then to take that shotgun shells to Sergeant Soto, located on the Chancery Roof.<sup>10</sup>

#### CHANCERY ROOF – UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0243 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

For the previous couple of minutes, Sergeant Soto had been hearing the sound of AK-47's coming from the direction of the Presidential Palace. Just then he heard an explosion coming from the that direction and he moved immediately to the edge of the roof to investigate its source. He observed the two Military Policeman moving from their post at the Vehicle Gate and taking cover by the short wall next to the driveway and a group of Vietnamese coming from a lot across the street from in front of the Embassy. As he was taking this in, a tremendous explosion coming from the wall at the corner of Mac Dinh Chi and Thong Nhut streets. As the debris cleared from the explosion he observed a hole in the wall. Immediately SP4th Class Daniel and Private First Class Sebast contact WACO Net (MP Communication Net) are radio "Signal 300" (enemy attack) and then began delivering accurate fire at the Viet Cong attempting to enter this hole. SP4 Daniel then radio's the WACO Net, "They're coming in! Help me! Help me!" Exposed to deadly fire, they stood their ground, killing two of the attacking Viet Cong before being killed by a Viet Cong Sapper approaching from behind. With his shotgun for a weapon he attempted to fire at the Viet Cong but the shotgun jammed and he tried to engage them with his .38 pistol, but with no affect. This valiant stand made by these two courageous Military Policeman, in delaying the entry of the Viet Cong into the Embassy Compound provided enough time for Sergeant Harper to get from Post #12 at Norodom Compound and into the Embassy Chancery Building and secure the Main Entrance. Without their sacrifice there is no doubt that the Embassy Building would have been able to be breached and the outcome of this battle would have had a much different ending. At this time Naguyen Thai Ba, a night

chauffeur attempts to stop the Viet Cong and is shot down. The lead element of the Viet Cong blows the lock of the side gate and the telephone lines are cut.<sup>79</sup>

He observed the Viet Cong moving towards the round planters in the Embassy Compound and as they reached cover behind one of the planters, two of the Sappers in front of the Main Entrance fired the first of two B-40 rockets at the Main Entrance Doors. Powerless to stop this action, due to lack of ammunition, Sergeant Soto then transmitted over Dragon Net that Post #1 at the Embassy was under attack and had been hit at least twice by rockets.<sup>11</sup> As this was taking place on the roof of the Embassy, Lance Corporal Wilson contacted Marine House by telephone in order to report the attack and to request more men and ammunition.<sup>12</sup>

## CHAPTER 3 – Support Rally's

### MARINE HOUSE – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0245 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Corporal Dennis L. Ryan, on duty at Marine House as the Duty Noncommissioned Officer, began hearing firing and several explosions coming from the direction of the American Embassy. Corporal Ryan immediately rushed to the Movie Room to awaken Captain O'Brien and inform him of what he had heard. Captain O'Brien instructed him to make sure everyone was up and the reaction force reported to the parking lot. Corporal Ryan began going through Marine House making sure all the Marines were awake. Returning to his post he received the incoming call from Lance Corporal Wilson at Post #12 in Norodom Compound.

### VEHICLE PARKING LOT – MARINE HOUSE – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0258 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Captain O'Brien immediately contacted Sergeant Fratarelli and they both raced for the sedan where they met with Sergeant Patullo, Sergeant Raymond E. Reed and Corporal Timothy P. Inemer who were loading into one of the Marines International Scouts. He ordered this group to follow him and he departed for the Embassy.

Captain O'Brien's Reaction Force was just departing the Parking Lot as Staff Sergeant Leroy J. Banks arrived at the Main Gate of Marine House. Upon arriving, Staff Sergeant Bank's assumed command of the Reaction Force that was beginning to gather there. His Reaction Force consisted of Sergeant H. Dean Spersrud, Sergeant James W. Jimerson, Sergeant Joseph J. Haas, Corporal Richard L. Huss, Corporal Dennis L. Ryan, Corporal James C. Marshall, and Lance Corporal Warren D. Caudle. Within three minutes he had the reaction force mounted in the vehicle and proceeded to the front side of the Embassy approximately 300 meters from the Embassy Compound, and he came upon a Military Police Checkpoint which an on-duty Traffic Patrol has established a few minutes earlier. He informed the MP's that he was a Marine

Reaction Force which was moving toward the Embassy in order to reinforce the Marine Guard Force. He then had his Reaction Force dismount.

#### VIETNAMESE CHECKPOINT – CORNER OF MAC DINH CHI AND HUNG TRAP TU – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0300 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

As Captain O'Brien's Reaction approached the corner of Mac Dinh Chi and Hung Trap Tu, they came upon a Vietnamese Police Checkpoint. The Vietnamese Policemen were yelling "VC" and pointing toward the American Embassy. Captain O'Brien had his Reaction Force dismount from the vehicles and move toward the Embassy's Vehicle Gate on foot.<sup>14</sup>

#### GENERAL WILLIAM C. WESTMORELAND'S QUARTERS – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0300 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

General William C. Westmoreland was awakened by a telephone call from the Military Assistance Command and briefed on the little information available as to the explosions at both the Presidential Palace and the United States Embassy.<sup>16</sup>

#### LTC GEORGE'S QUARTERS – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0300 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

LTC George was awakened at his quarters and was briefed by telephone from the Military Police Desk. They briefed him on the communications received over the radio from the on-duty Military Police Patrols. The Desk Sergeant informed him that there were unconfirmed reports relating to an apparent attack of the Embassy. LTC George then directed the Desk Sergeant to dispatch a First Precinct Patrol to the American Embassy, but to insure that the understood the need to dismount about a block away and check out the situation on foot. LTC George then dressed and headed to the Military Police Desk.

527<sup>TH</sup> MILITARY POLICE COMPANY BILLITS – INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SAIGON,  
VIETNAM

0300 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Leslie R. Trent, the Charge of Quarters for the 527<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company received the orders to have their Reaction Force deploy to the new American Embassy, he immediately went to Sergeant Arthur Rivera's room and informed him that the American Embassy was under attack and to get his Reaction Force ready to go. Sergeant Rivera immediately went to his 11 man Reaction Force's room to get them started to the Reaction Force Vehicle. Time was saved as the team had followed LTC Rowe's order to sleep in their fatigues.<sup>18</sup>

Lieutenant Frank Ribich was woken in his room and informed that the American Embassy was under attack. He immediately dressed and went down stairs where he met with LTC Rowe, who then briefed him of the communications from the Embassy and the fact that there had been several explosions. LTC Rowe then told him to take charge of the 527<sup>th</sup> Reaction Force which was being prepared for dispatch.<sup>19</sup>

While preparing his team, Sergeant Rivera was instructed to stand by until the Intelligence Officer briefed him. Minutes later Sergeant Rivera met with the Intelligence Officer and was briefed on the limited information available, and moved his Reaction Force to the alert vehicle where he met up with Lieutenant Ribich.<sup>20</sup>

300 METERS FROM THE FRONT GATE – AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0302 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Staff Sergeant Banks split his Reaction Force into two teams, deploying one to move along the trees by the roadway and the other to follow him along the front wall of the Embassy.

SERGEANT THOMAS AND SPECIALIST MEBUST PATROL VEHICLE – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0305 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Jonnie B. Thomas and SP4 Owen E. Mebust receive the call for assistance that Specialist Daniel made over WACO Net. They were responding as they received the call from WACO Net, dispatching them to check out the situation at the American Embassy.<sup>79</sup>



Military Police Patrol from A Company, 716<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion during TET of 1968

## CHAPTER 4 – Initial Help Arrives

### NEAR NORODOM COMPOUND FRONT GATE- SAIGON, VIETNAM

0304 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Staff Sergeant Bank's Reaction Force was nearing the Norodom Compound Gate when they came under heavy automatic weapons fire. He quickly moved his force into Norodom Compound and attempted to gain entry into the Embassy Compound through the side gate. Staff Sergeant Banks sent Corporal Huss to the side gate and he found that the gate was locked. Corporal Huss yelled to Sergeant Schuepfer to unlock the side gate, but Sergeant Schuepfer informed him and Staff Sergeant Banks that there were Viet Cong Sappers inside the Main Embassy Compound.

Staff Sergeant Banks made the decision to have half of his men remain in Norodom Compound and he would lead the other half of the Reaction Force using the cover of the trees, along the side wall of the Embassy to the Embassy Main Gate. Upon arrival at the Main Gate he would be able to engage the enemy in the Main Embassy Compound through the wrought iron gate.

### FRONT EMBASSY WALL – TRONG NHAT STREET – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0310 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Staff Sergeant Banks, Sergeant Spersaud, Sergeant Jimerson Jr., and Cpl Huss departed Norodom Compound and began moving down the Embassy Wall using the cover of the trees as much as possible. As they moved down the wall toward the Embassy Compound Gate, a hand grenade was thrown over the wall, hitting Sergeant Jimerson on his leg. Thinking quickly, Sergeant Jimerson kicked the grenade into the street and yelled, "Hit the deck!" The grenade exploded in the street and none of the team were injured by the explosion. As the grenade exploded, the team came under heavy sniper fire from across the street and were forced to withdraw back to the vicinity of Norodom Compound Gate. The team was nearing the gate when another grenade was thrown over the wall. Seeing the grenade hit the sidewalk, Corporal

Ryan from inside the compound yelled, “grenade”, and the entire Reaction Force again hit the deck. Due to Corporal Ryan’s warning, none of the team was injured. While the team was moving toward the Embassy Gate, Sergeant Schuepfer had unlocked the personnel gate and Lance Corporal Caudle and Corporal Huss opened the gate, which allowed Staff Sergeant Banks and his team to enter the gate, where he deployed them along the wall between Norodom Compound and the Embassy Compound.

#### VIETNAMESE POLICE COMPOUND – MAC DINH CHI STREET – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0308 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Captain O’Brien divided his team in half and began to move down the Mac Dinh from the Vietnamese Police Compound, with one half of the team moving down the wall and the other half using the trees for cover moved down the other side of the street. As the team was nearing the Vehicle Gate, Viet Cong Sappers from inside the Embassy Compound, fired rockets at several of the upper floors of the Embassy Building. As Captain O’Brien neared the Vehicle Gate he began calling to the Military Policeman but received no answer, (both SP4 Daniel and PFC Mebust had been killed 18 minutes earlier).

Upon reaching the Vehicle Gate, Captain O’Brien observed approximately six Viet Cong Sappers near the flower pots and pillars, which were located close to the Chancery Building. The Viet Cong Sappers had their backs toward the Vehicle Gate and Captain O’Brien instructed Sergeant Reed to begin firing with the team’s only Beretta Sub-machine gun while Captain O’Brien, Sergeant Frattarelli and Sergeant Paqtulio fired their .38 cal Pistols. It appeared that Sergeant Reed’s burst of automatic weapons fire, killed one of the Viet Cong Sappers while wounding another. The Viet Cong Sappers quickly recovered and began returning a large volume of automatic weapons fire. An intense fire fight ensued for the next four minutes, but in the end, Captain O’Brien and his team were forced to withdraw across the street, where Corporal Inemer providing covering fire from his position by the trees.<sup>22</sup>



Personnel Gate, United States Embassy, Vietnam

RESPONSE FORCE VEHICLE,-PARKING LOT-INTERNATIONAL HOTEL-SAIGON,  
VIETNAM

0317 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Lieutenant Ribich joined with Sergeant Rivera and went over the information they had, and loaded up their Reaction Force. The decision was made to take the vehicles as far as John F. Kennedy Circle, then dismount, and walk the rest of the way.<sup>23</sup> The teams vehicles consisted of a ¾ ton truck and a jeep. Each member of the Reaction Force was armed with a .45 Caliber Pistol, with three 8 round magazines and an M-16 Rifle with 100 rounds of ammunition. Although events proved that this was not near enough, the vehicles were to have extra ammunition, grenades, smoke, and a PRC-10 radio. Following the loading of the vehicles, the Reaction Force departed for John F. Kennedy Circle.<sup>25</sup>

## MR. CALHOUN'S RESIDENCE – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0320 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Mr. David Carpenter, Political Officer, United States Embassy, arrived at Mr. Calhoun's residence, where he was able to telephone the Military Assistance Command (MAC-V) Operations Center. Mr. Carpenter had been in contact with the Embassy, and was aware of the situation. He requested from MAC-V a Dust Off (medical evacuation) helicopter to evacuate Corporal Zahuranic. He also advised them that the evacuation would have to be carried out from the helipad on the roof of the United States Embassy.<sup>24</sup>

## POST #12 – NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0325 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1969

Corporal Huss and Sergeant Schuepfer realized that the back entrance from the United States Embassy was not being covered and after informing Staff Sergeant Banks, they moved to the area near the rear parking lot of the Embassy. Arriving at the rear parking lot, Corporal Huss observed what appeared to be a Viet Cong, who was walking behind a blue sedan. Lacking information on who was stationed near the vehicles, he did not open fire. When the Vietnamese walked into the light a couple of seconds later, Corporal Huss observed his AK-47 Rifle and immediately began firing with his .38 caliber revolver, which was the only weapon he had available. Although he hit the Viet Cong in his lower body, knocking him down, the wounded man managed to crawl behind another vehicle. Corporal Huss fired all the ammunition in his pistol and could not further engage the VC without re-loading.<sup>26</sup>

## NEAR NORODOM COMPOUND GATE – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0325 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Corporal Ryan being stationed near the Norodom Compound Gate observed a Military Police Patrol vehicle, with Sergeant Thomas and SP4th Class Mebust, driving down Trong Nhat and pulled up in front of the Embassy near the Main Gate. While exiting the vehicle on the

passenger side and turning as if to walk to the rear and Sergeant Thomas sitting on the passenger side, came under automatic weapons fire from across the street. Sergeant Thomas was hit in the back where he set and SP4 Mebust was hit and after stumbling toward the vehicle. Although Corporal Ryan yelled for the driver to take cover and get an ambulance, SP4 Mebust apparently did not hear him or realize that Sergeant Thomas was dead. Specialist Mebust reaching Sergeant Thomas, grabbed the radio microphone in an apparent attempt to transmit but was killed by a burst of automatic weapons fire. Seeing SP4 Mebust fall on Sergeant Thomas' body, Corporal Ryan was unable to assist, since his only weapon was a .38 caliber revolver, and the heavy fire from the Viet Cong Ambush across the street had driven him to take cover. Later investigation revealed that Sergeant Thomas and SP4 Mebust had just returned from R&R and may not have though the action was at the old American Embassy which was located two blocks away.<sup>27</sup>

#### JOHN F. KENNEDY CIRCLE – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0325 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Lieutenant Ribich and his Reaction Force arrived at John F. Kennedy Circle and dismounted from their vehicles. Lieutenant Ribich ordered Sergeant Rivera to divide the Reaction Force in half and Sergeant Rivera would take one team and Lieutenant Ribich the other. This allowed Lieutenant Ribich the option of splitting the force into two fire teams if required. Lieutenant Ribich then briefed the entire Reaction Force on working as a fire team and both teams departed the three blocks to the Embassy. As they were moving toward the Embassy, Lieutenant Ribich observed what he believed to be 15 Vietnamese dressed in black pajamas moving away from the Embassy area, not knowing the situation at the Embassy, and not wanting to give away his Reaction Force's position he made the decision not to open fire.

#### ABORD DUSTOFF 75 – OVER THE DELTA – VIETNAM

0326 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Captain Thomas W. Hill, Executive Officer, 57<sup>th</sup> Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance), flying a Medical Evacuation Helicopter, over the Delta towards the Saigon Area. His call sign was Dust Off 75 and his helicopter was in the air, after completing a medical

evacuation mission for a South Vietnamese Soldier. He had just dropped that soldier at Tay Ninh Hospital when the TET Offensive began. Due to the rocket attacks currently being made on American Base Camps with meant that his helicopter was the only Medical Evacuation Helicopter flyable. He received the Dust Off request from MAC-V Headquarters and informed them that he would have to fuel first. He further ask MAC-V for a radio frequency and call sign and was informed that they did not have that and that the United States Embassy was currently under attack.



Dust Off Helicopter at Vietnamese Hospital – Tay Ninh, Vietnam

TRONG NAHT NEAR THE INTERSECTION OF BA TRUNG – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0332 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Approaching the intersections of Trong Naht and Ba Trung, less than a block from Norodom Compound, Lieutenant Ribich observed a large volume of red and green tracers, hitting the street and buildings. He instructed one of the members of his team to cross the street, go over the fence, and enter the French Embassy Compound, in order to clear the area and

provide cover for the force which would pass this critical point. Crossing the street and jumping over the fence, this lone Military Policeman found evidence confirming that the Viet Cong had been in the compound but there was no evidence any were there at that point. He moved to the French Embassy wall, taking up a position where he could cover the Reaction Force, he signaled Lieutenant Ribich he was in position.

As the Reaction Force moved along the wall of the French Embassy about 400 feet from the gate at Norodom Compound, they came under heavy automatic weapons fire from the Apartment Building across from the Embassy. He further observed seeing Sergeant Thomas' Jeep although he was unaware that both Sergeant Thomas and SP4 Mebust been killed only minutes before.

#### TRONG NHAT AT NORODOM COMPOUND GATE – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0337 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Lieutenant Ribich, after assessing the situation and seeing that the incoming fire was from the direction of the apartment building opposite the Embassy Compound, ordered Sergeant Rivera to take his team and assault the building, secure it, and to spread out on the street in order to make certain that no further fire would come from that location.<sup>28</sup>

#### TRONG NHAT ACROSS FROM NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0339 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Realizing the seriousness of the cross fire which the force was receiving and the need to ensure the security of Norodom Compound and the area in front of the US Embassy. Sergeant Rivera placed two of his Military Policemen in a position to secure the approach to the Embassy and provide a checkpoint to limit access to the area. He then gave the instructions to fire on Sappers seen in the area and to let no one enter or leave the area without his or Lieutenant Ribich's permission. He then deployed his remaining four Military Policemen, and began moving his team toward his objective. Unaware that the sniper at this location had already

abandoned his position, Sergeant Rivera realized that his meager force would have to secure the building from the top down and ordered his men to make a rush for the roof.



Reaction Force Team Members outside Norodom Compound

ROOF OF THE APARTMENT BUILDING ACROSS FROM THE AMERICAN EMBASSY –  
SAIGON, VIETNAM

0342 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Arriving on the roof of the Apartment Building, Sergeant Rivera observed four individuals with weapons and ordered them to drop their firearms. The individuals quickly complied and it was found that they were all American Civilians. Cautiously moving over to the group, Sergeant Rivera covered them with his M-16 while ensuring their identity and then ordered them to their rooms as they would cause confusion by firing at uncertain targets. Explaining that the Military Police were deploying on the street below, he instructed the civilians not to fire out of the building. He then ordered his men to clear the building floor by floor and giving the same instructions to all civilians. Quickly clearing the building his team secured the structure and ensured that all the entrances were locked in order to deny any Viet Cong entrance into the building. He then dispersed his team on the street and returned to the checkpoint and informed Lieutenant Ribich of the mission completion, allowing Lieutenant Ribich's team and Sergeant Rivera to enter Norodom Compound.<sup>29</sup>



Military Police Reaction Force Member



Military Police Checkpoint outside Norodom Compound on Trong Nhat Street

## NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON VIETNAM

0355 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Upon Sergeant Rivera's return, Lieutenant Ribich along with Sergeant Rivera and Lieutenant Ribich's team entered Norodom Compound announcing that they were Military Police. Lieutenant Ribich ask who was in command and Staff Sergeant Banks indicated that he was in charge of the Marines. Lieutenant Ribich briefed Staff Sergeant Banks as to the deployment of the Military Police and the actions that Sergeant Rivera's team accomplished at the Apartment Building. At this time these two leaders made a critical decision that was to have profound impact of the entire battle. He realized that it was imperative that the Marine Chain of Command remain intact, so he set up a joint command with Staff Sergeant Banks who would continue to direct the Marine Guard while coordinating his activities with Lieutenant Ribich. This makeshift command proved extremely effective during the entire battle, with Staff Sergeant Banks and Lieutenant Ribich working closely together.<sup>30</sup>

## GATE BETWEEN NORODOM COMPOUND AND BACK PARKING LOT OF THE EMBASSY, SAIGON, VIETNAM

0355 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Corporal Huss and Lance Corporal Caudle in the area near the rear parking lot of Norodom Compound, made the decision to run for a door to the Embassy Motor Pool, located in the Generator Building. As Lance Corporal Caudle made a break for that location, he was fired upon by a couple of automatic weapons. Reaching the building, he rushed through the door and took cover on the floor, as the building was being peppered with automatic weapons fire. Under the mistaken belief that he was being fired on by guards inside the Chancery Building, Lance Corporal Caudle yelled for Corporal Huss to radio the guards to stop firing. Corporal Huss realized that the firing was coming from the Sappers, told Lance Corporal Caudle to stay under cover, and since he was only armed with a .38 cal pistol, he departed to get more firepower from Staff Sergeant Banks.

## GUARD POST #12 – NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0400 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Staff Sergeant Banks was able to get in contact with Sergeant Soto on the Embassy Roof, via radio on Dragon Net. He stated that he was okay and safe. He briefed Staff Sergeant Banks of what he had seen of the Viet Cong movement below him.

After dispersing his Reaction Force to defensive positions, Lieutenant Ribich and Staff Sergeant Banks entered Guard Post #12 and telephoned Gunnery Sergeant Allen Morrison at Marine House. Lieutenant Ribich briefed him on the current deployment of his Military Policemen and the command structure that he and Staff Sergeant Banks had worked out. While discussing plans to retake the Embassy Compound, they decided not to attempt to scale the walls or enter the compound prior to daybreak, as this would result in unacceptable casualties, and the Embassy Chancery Building was currently secure. Gunnery Sergeant Morrison confirmed his agreement with the command structure. (The inter-service attack force, comprised of Military Policeman and Marine Security Guards, which would prove to be a determining factor during the remainder of the night and the upcoming assault on the Embassy Compound. The smooth quick response to the changing situation by both the Military Police and Marines working in coordination was nothing short of remarkable.)<sup>31</sup>

## AIRBORNE NEAR LONG BIEN, VIETNAM

0400 hours, January 31, 1968

Captain Hill in Dust Off 75 was contacted by Dust Off Control and requested the Estimated Time he would be at the American Embassy as the coordination would have to go through Military Assistance Command Vietnam. He stated they were on final to refuel and would be at the Embassy in about 35 minutes. He was also informed that they had one seriously wounded American and requested that they bring in some ammunition. SP5 Thomas L. “Egor” Johnson, the Crew Chief informed Captain Hill that he had six boxes of M-16 Ammunition on the helicopter along with the clips of filled magazines he had for their personal weapons. Captain Hill ask if there was any other available Dust Off ship, and was told that until the

damage assessment from the rocket attack could be made, he was the only ship flyable. Further, Dust Off 70, Captain Craig Honoman and his crew hoped to be flyable in an hour or so. Captain Hill informed them that as soon as he was re-fueled he would be in-route to the Embassy and ask them to inform MAC-V. Eight minutes later Captain Hill and his crew were back in the air and in-route to the American Embassy.<sup>33</sup>



SP5 Thomas L. "Egor" Johnson – Crew Chief of Dust Off 75

#### TEMPORARY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER – ONE MILE FROM THE AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0400 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Mr. Carpenter, the Minister Counselor for Political Affairs, who had been stationed one mile from the Embassy Chancery, in a temporary Communications Center, made contact with Mr. John Thompson, the Duty Officer at the Operations Center of the State Department, Washington, DC, and briefed him on the situation at the Embassy.<sup>34</sup>

## GENERATOR BUILDING – US EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0400 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

After Corporal Huss departed for Post #12, Lance Corporal Caudle observed several Viet Cong leaving the adjacent room and walking toward the Chancery with their hands in the air. Thinking they were surrendering to the Marine Guards, he stepped outside the doorway to cover them. At this time a Sapper, hiding behind a tree in the parking lot, opened fire on Lance Corporal Caudle, causing him to jump back inside the building again hitting the floor. Once again intense fire, which included a rocket, exploded against the wall, but again he was not injured.

## AREA NEAR GUARD POST #12 – NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0402 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Corporal Huss reached the area near Post #12 and met with Lieutenant Ribich and Staff Sergeant Banks. He briefed them on what was happening at the rear parking area. Staff Sergeant Banks immediately ordered Sergeant Jimerson, Sergeant Spersrud, Corporal Marshall, along with two of the Military Policemen to come with him to the rear parking lot.

## TRONGT NHAT STREET – OUTSIDE NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0405, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

An on-duty Military Police Patrol arrived outside the gate of Norodom Compound. They reported to Lieutenant Ribich and due to the seriousness of the situation and the fact that this patrol was equipped with an M-60 Machine Gun, Lieutenant Ribich decided to employ them at the rear parking lot. He instructed them to follow him, they retrieved their M-60 and followed Lieutenant Ribich to the back parking area.<sup>36</sup>

NEAR REAR PARKING AREA – AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0405 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

As Staff Sergeant Banks and his team reached the area, the firing had subsided and Lance Corporal Caudle took advantage in this lull to rush from the Generator Building towards the team. As he arrived, Lieutenant Ribich arrived with the Military Police Patrol and their M-60 Machine Gun. Lieutenant Ribich ordered the Military Police Patrol to come under Staff Sergeant Banks command and departed back to Post #12. Staff Sergeant Banks ordered Sergeant Jimerson to work with the Military Police Patrol and Sergeant Jimerson then began jumping outside the doorway, spotting targets for the M-60 Machine Gun.

REAR PARKING AREA – AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0410 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Taking advantage of the new firepower, Staff Sergeant Banks decided to move his team, one at a time, through the open gateway into the parking area. Armed with a Beretta, Sergeant Jimerson expressed his desire to go first in order to lay down an additional base of fire.

## CHAPTER 5 – Containment

### REAR PARKING AREA – AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0412 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

As Sergeant Jimerson went through the gateway, he spotted two Viet Cong Sappers running across the parking lot. He fired all twenty rounds from his Beretta, and observed both Viet Cong fall. Attempting to get back into a doorway, Sergeant Jimerson encountered a large volume of fire and a rocket, which exploded against the door facing, causing a small wound to his left hand. While he was still dazed, the intense fire directed at him inflicted a wound in his right leg, but Sergeant Jimerson was able to get back through the gateway under the covering fire of the M-60 Machine Gun.<sup>37</sup>

Due to Sergeant Jimerson's wounds and the inability to break through the opposing force, Staff Sergeant Banks decided to move back to Post #12 in Norodom Compound and evacuate Sergeant Jimerson to that area. As another rocket exploded, Staff Sergeant Banks departed with part of his team, Sergeant Jimerson and left the Military Police Patrol with its M-60 Machine Gun and two of his team members to cover the area, thereby protecting these positions from entry of the Viet Cong into Norodom Compound.

### MARINE HOUSE, SAIGON, VIETNAM

0415 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Gunnery Sergeant Morrison was informed by the Communication Center at MAC-V that Dust Off 75 was in-route to the Embassy and should be on the scene at approximately 0430 hours. He was further informed that LTC George was forming Reaction Force which would be dispatched to the Embassy by air. Enemy fire prevented the helicopter from picking up the Military Police Platoon at Tan Son Nhut, the decision was to have the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne put together a team that would be airlifted to the top of the Embassy. Gunnery Sergeant Morrison radioed Sergeant Soto on the Roof of the Embassy and informed him of Dust Off's estimated

arrival time and then contacted Lieutenant Ribich at Norodom Compound and briefed him of the information he had received.<sup>35</sup>

#### PROVOST MARSHAL MILITARY POLICE DESK – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0418 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

The Military Police Desk Sergeant received the request from Lieutenant Ribich for more ammunition. He immediately contacted Sergeant Rob Kuldass, who was the Traffic Chief and LTC George with this request. LTC George issued ordered Sergeant Kuldass to go to the Ammunition Bunker, use whatever means necessary to get ammunition, and then deliver it to the Embassy. Taking Captainain David L. Davenport and one Korean Military Policeman with him, Sergeant Kuldass managed to get the ammunition from the bunker, load it into a van, and departed for the American Embassy.<sup>48</sup>

#### NEAR GUARD POST #12 – NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0425 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Arriving at their make shift Command Post, Staff Sergeant Banks briefed Lieutenant Ribich on what had happened at the rear parking area and that he had left the Military Police Patrol and two team members to cover that area. Staff Sergeant Banks then contacted Gunnery Sergeant Morrison at Marine House to brief him of the developments and requested an ambulance be sent about a block from the compound for the evacuation of Sergeant Jimerson.<sup>38</sup>

As Staff Sergeant Banks and Lieutenant Ribich were briefing Gunnery Sergeant Morrison, two Military Policeman began administering first aid to Sergeant Jimerson. While they were working on him, Sergeant Jimerson saw a rocket coming in and he yelled “incoming” and the two Military Policeman jumped on him to cover his body. The rocket exploded spraying the area with shrapnel and wounding one of the Military Policeman in his left arm, the protection provided by the Military Policemen’s Flack Jackets prevented him from being wounded more seriously.

Gunnery Sergeant Morrison immediately contacted MAC-V and requested an ambulance, and a few minutes later the ambulance arrived at Trong Nhat and Ba Trung Streets. Sergeant Jimerson was then taken to the ambulance and transported to 17<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital. The wounded Military Policeman refused evacuation as he stated his wound was not bad and they needed the help.<sup>38</sup>

#### GUARD POST #12 – NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0425 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Staff Sergeant Banks contacted Sergeant Harper inside the Chancery Building by telephone and briefed him on what was going on at Norodom Compound and Sergeant Harper advised him of the activity occurring in the Front Compound. Staff Sergeant Banks then explained the decision to wait until daybreak to assault the compound and assured Sergeant Harper that they would get to him as soon as possible.<sup>45</sup> He then departed and went to the rear parking area to see how the Military Police and his team members were doing. Upon his arrival he found that the gateway was still under heavy fire. He also observed that the Viet Cong had the entire wall and entrance covered from well entrenched firing positions. Hearing the fire coming from Captain O'Brien's team, he returned to the make shift Command Post where he informed Lieutenant Ribich of the situation, and they then contacted Gunnery Sergeant Morrison to relay the information.<sup>46</sup> Staff Sergeant Banks again contacted Sergeant Harper and directed him to make sure that the Viet Cong did not enter the Chancery.

#### ACROSS FROM THE VEHICLE GATE – MAC DINH CHI – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0425 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

After several attempts to get to the Vehicle Gate, Captain. O'Brien decided to send Sergeant Frattarelli back to the sedan by the Vietnamese Police Compound in order to contact Gunnery Sergeant Morrison and request more men and ammunition. Sergeant Frattarelli departed and moved up the street to the sedan.

CAPTAIN O'BRIEN'S SEDAN – NEAR VIETNAMESE POLICE COMPOUND – SAIGON,  
VIETNAM

0428 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Frattarelli reached their sedan and contacted Gunnery Sergeant Morrison via Dragon Net. He passed on Captain O'Brien's requests and briefed him on what had happened at the Vehicle Gate. Gunnery Sergeant Morrison briefed Sergeant Frattarelli of what was happening on the other side of the Embassy.

CHANCERY BUILDING – AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0428 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Harper crawled out of the armory as there was still bullets hitting inside the lobby and made a dash for the Service Entrance. Suddenly a local Vietnamese Guard stuck his head out of the Service Entrance Hallway. Since the guard did not move, Sergeant Harper recognized him, walked over, and searched him. Checking the doorway to ensure it was secure, he took the guard and returned to the armory. He then placed the Vietnamese guard in the corner for the night. He was then contacted by Mr. Wendt, and learned that PFC Fisher had been unable to get to the roof as Sergeant Soto, who was out of ammunition, locked the door, apparently thinking the Viet Cong Sappers were trying to enter.

He then attempted to get in touch with Sergeant Soto but was unable to do so. He then contacted Mr. James A. Griffin, who was on duty in the Communications Section and requested that he come down in the elevator to get a .38 cal pistol and extra ammunition as well as a Master Key. By this time, the Military Assistance Command Operations Center had informed Mr. Wendt that the Dust Off helicopter was in-route. Mr. Wendt and Mr. Griffin then moved Corporal Zahuranic to the roof to await evacuation.<sup>49</sup>

## ACROSS FROM THE VEHICLE GATE – MAC DINH CHI – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0428 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

SP4 Delmer P. Miles and SP4 Harold Cockran, an on-duty Military Police Patrol arrived at Captain O'Brien's location. As SP4 Miles was coming to Captain O'Brien's location, Mr. Champsey and Mr. Robert Furey, State Department Security Advisor, also arrived and were taken to Captain O'Brien.

It was then decided to attempt to shoot off the lock at the Vehicle Gate. Crossing the street, Mr. Furey and Captain O'Brien were attempting to disengage the lock, SP4 Cockran, who was across the street, saw two armed men in civilian clothing attempting to gain entrance to the compound and almost shot them before he realized that they were Americans. Intense sniper fire then forced Mr. Furey and Captain O'Brien to withdraw across the street to SP4 Cockran's position. At this time an additional on-duty Military Police Patrol arrived at their location.



Military Police Gun Jeep

It was decided that SP4 Miles and one of the other patrol's Military Policemen would go to the roof of a building behind them and begin firing into the Embassy Compound while SP4 Cockran would remain on the street to coordinate the Military Police response. A few minutes

later, Captain O'Brien and Mr. Crampsey decided to move behind the compound to get on top of the building across from the Mission Coordinator's Office, in order to cover any further attempts to enter the compound through the vehicle gate.<sup>41</sup>

## MARINE HOUSE – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0430 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Gunnery Sergeant Morrison received a call from Colonel George D. Jacobson, the Mission Coordinator, informing him that he was in his quarters on the second floor of the Mission Coordinator's house within the Embassy Compound, and that there were Viet Cong on the lower floor, and that he was unarmed. Gunnery Sergeant Morrison immediately contacted Lieutenant Ribich and Staff Sergeant Banks and briefed them and instructed them not to fire into the second floor. The word was passed to the men in the compound as well as to the Military Police on the M-60 crew.

Gunnery Sergeant Morrison then received a call from Military Assistance Command Operations Center and learned that a plane was in-route to spray tear on the compound. He advised them to have the mission cancelled as the Marines and Military Police did not have protective masks. The mission was then scrubbed.

Gunnery Sergeant Morrison then contacted Sergeant Ariola at MAC-V Headquarters, asking him to inform General Westmoreland's aid that the best course of action was to provide weapons and ammunition to Marine House, leaving Gunnery Sergeant Morrison with the responsibility of getting it to the Embassy. He then sent Sergeant Richard L. Johnson and Sergeant Joseph S. Wolff to Ambassador Komer's house to pick up a Beretta sub-machine gun. Since this location was only two blocks from Marine House they were able to return in ten minutes without incident.

ROOF OF THE OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT- NORODOM COMPOUND –  
SAIGON, VIETNAM

0430 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Corporal Marshall and Corporal Ryan, climbed on top of the Office of the Special Assistant, in order to obtain a good field of fire into the Embassy Compound. While following Corporal Marshall to the roof, he heard him fire a .45 pistol that he had obtained from one of the Military Policemen. Corporal Marshall then stated that the M-60, which was stationed at the rear of Norodom Compound, was driving the Viet Cong Sappers into the front compound.

Corporal Ryan, armed with a Beretta and 200 rounds of ammunition, saw three Viet Cong Sappers run toward the Main Entrance of the Chancery Building. He open up on them and all three took cover by the round planters. Observing a Sapper crawling from behind a planter, Corporal Marshall fired several rounds with his .45 cal Pistol and hit him. A few seconds later an explosion of a grenade went off under him, blowing his feet into the air.

Two more Viet Cong Sappers were spotted by Corporal Marshall but before he could fire, Corporal Ryan was wounded in the head, left arm, and left leg by a rocket that hit the Office of the Special Assistant. Corporal Marshall immediately went to Corporal Ryan's assistance and helped him to the ground to waiting Military Policeman who put a field dressing over his wounds. Fearing that a piece of shrapnel, which was protruding from his head might kill him if removed, Lieutenant Ribich, who rushed to the area, instructed them to leave the wound alone. A few minutes later Corporal Ryan was evacuated to the 17<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital.

Corporal Wilson then went to the roof to assist Corporal Marshall who after getting Corporal Ryan off the roof, returned to his position. For the next six minutes, they fired at movement in the Embassy Compound. At this time another rocket hit the French roof of the building but failed to explode.<sup>44</sup>

## TWO BLOCKS FROM NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0430 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Kuldas with the re-supply of ammunition was two blocks from Norodom Compound came under sniper fire and was forced to turn back, taking a different route to the west side of the Embassy. Proceeding to the Embassy along Ba Trung, near Norodom Compound, Sergeant Kuldas arrived at the Military Police Checkpoint, just as Lieutenant Ribich was leaving the compound to inquire about the ammunition situation.

## TRONG NHAT STREET – OUTSIDE NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0435 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

As Lieutenant Ribich was leaving the gate, he observed a black vehicle approaching from the front of the Embassy. Lieutenant Ribich yelled in Vietnamese for it to stop. Ignoring his warning, the vehicle traveled past him to the Military Police Checkpoint, where it was stopped by Sergeant Rivera. As Sergeant Rivera walked toward the vehicle, he pointed his M-16 at the driver and asked what he was doing. Pointing across the river, the driver stated in English that he was going home. After telling the driver that he was not going anywhere, Sergeant Rivera began checking the vehicle. As he was visually scanning the back seat, the driver gunned the vehicle, swirled around, and headed down the street toward Lieutenant Ribich.

Sergeant Rivera and members of his Reaction Force including an M-60 from the Military Police Patrol which arrived earlier, opened fire at the back of the vehicle, while Lieutenant Ribich fired his M-16, hitting the driver's compartment, engine and front tire. Across the street, a Military Policeman began firing as the vehicle passed Lieutenant Ribich. As the Military Police rounds passed through the vehicle and began hitting the wall by Lieutenant Ribich, he was forced, by friendly fire to take cover. Crossing the street, the vehicle came to rest about eight feet from the Military Policeman's position.<sup>53</sup>



Vehicle and Driver after the Battle

HEADQUARTERS, COMPANY B, 716<sup>TH</sup> MILITARY POLICE BATTALION – SAIGON,  
VIETNAM

0430 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Captain James T. Chester, Commander, B Company, 716<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion, formed his 50 man Reaction Force up and loaded them on the company vehicles to respond to the American Embassy. After forming up, they departed for the Embassy.



AIRBORNE – 10 MILES FROM THE AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0435 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Coming into the area near the American Embassy, Captain Hill began to brief the Dust Off crew on what he was planning upon arrival at the Embassy. Without any communication with the Embassy he instructed the crew to keep their eyes open to see where the fire was coming from. He stated he planned to come in from the river side and turn his light on just before landing as the landing pad was not that large. He stated that the crew was to watch for the obstructions as he had not landed on the pad before.<sup>54</sup>

ACROSS FROM THE VEHICLE GATE – AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0435 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Frattarelli again received instructions from Captain O'Brien to return to the sedan and radio for additional ammunition. He immediately moved up the street toward the Canh-Sat Checkpoint where he was fired upon. Even though he yelled, "American" the firing

continued for the next ten minutes and he continued trying to reach the sedan, but was forced to return to the Vehicle Gate where he briefed Captain O'Brien on what happened.<sup>55</sup>

#### AIRBORNE – EAST OF THE AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0440 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Captain Hill approaching the Embassy from the east, informed the crew that they were on short final. SP5 Johnson, hanging outside of the door, with his foot on the skid, informed Captain Hill that he did not see any obstructions at the pad. Lieutenant Ribich hearing the helicopter approaching give orders to provide as much suppressive fire as possible.

As Dust Off 75 was on short final to the helipad, they began to receive heavy automatic weapons fire. Captain Hill had to abort the approach and moved off to the west and began setting up for another attempt. The second attempt was met by the same automatic weapons fire and it too had to be aborted.

Captain Hill's third attempt was made over Norodom Compound and as the ship slowed, the aircraft began to take hits in the cabin, and tail boom. Captain Hill was again forced to abort, and advised Dust Off Control to request that a replacement ship take over the mission. He was informed that they still did not have a ship flyable and it would be an hour to an hour and a half before a ship could be launched. He then requested that they contact MAC-V and have them tell the Embassy that he would be back, but he needed to check the aircraft for damage and insure that the fuel cells were not damaged.

Captain Hill then headed for Hotel 3 at Tan Son Nhut and in 5 minutes he was landing near the control tower. The Airbase was under attack by heavy automatic weapons fire, but they were able to land at an area where the firing was at a minimum and Captain Hill shut down the ship.

SP5 Johnson exited the helicopter and began checking for damage. He determined that the helicopter had received forty-one hits, but they were mainly in the tail boom section. (The Viet Cong had a tendency to shoot at the helicopters red cross' and with the doors open, as was

the practice when landing in a hot LZ, the hits tended to go into the tail). SP5 Johnson informed Captain Hill of the damage, but told him that nothing vital was hit. At this point in time Tan Son Nhut came under a rocket and mortar attack, which delayed the take off for 15 minutes.

#### NORODOM COMPOUND – AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0500 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Captain Chester and the 50 man Reaction Force arrived at Norodom Compound. They had dismounted two blocks away and moved in on foot. Captain Chester entered Norodom Compound and met with Lieutenant Ribich and Staff Sergeant Banks. It was determined that Captain Chester and his 50 man Reaction Force would deploy on the outside of the Embassy to secure the perimeter and contain the remaining Viet Cong inside and to insure that they had no routes of escape.<sup>58</sup>

#### UNITED STATES EMBASSY – COMMUNICATIONS SECTION – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0525 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Ambassador Bunker called Mr. Calhoun to report that the medevac had not been able to land and had taken some hits, but they have checked the helicopter and would be making another try at picking up the wounded.<sup>59</sup>

#### ROOF OF THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT – NORODOM COMPOUND – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0530 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Corporal Wilson, Corporal Wilson and two Military Policemen, stationed on the roof of the Office of the Special Assistant, spotted a Viet Cong Sapper behind a tree and fired in that direction. The Sapper began returning fire. Corporal Marshall was hit in the neck, and due to the heavy volume of fire the roof had to be evacuated. Corporal Marshall did not move, and a few minutes Corporal Wilson went back on the roof. Reaching Corporal Marshall, he found that he was dead and with the assistance of the Military Policeman to get off the roof and then returned

to take up his firing position. (Corporal Marshall's dedication to duty in his exposed position, was in the finest traditions of the Marine Corps).<sup>61</sup>



**Cpl James C. Marshall**  
MSG DET - Saigon, Vietnam

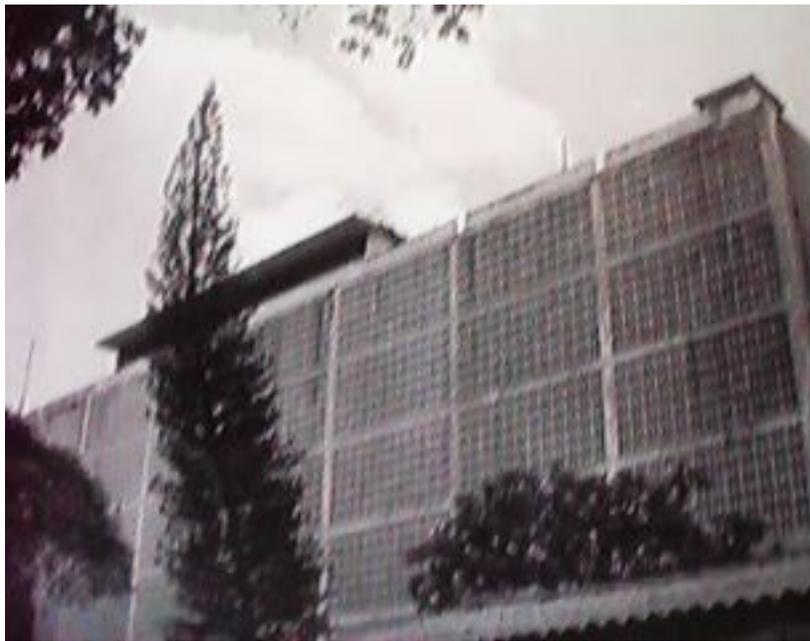
## AIRBORNE – BETWEEN TAN SON NHUT AIRFORCE BASE AND THE AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0600 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Due to the time it had taken to check out the helicopter, wait for the firing to subside at Tan Son Nhut Airforce Base, Captain Hill was finally able to get airborne to make another attempt at the evacuation mission. Dust Off 75 was approaching the Embassy and Captain Hill could observe that the main fire was coming from the front of the Embassy Compound. He made the decision to make a straight in approach from the rear of the Embassy, in order to give the Viet Cong as little warning as possible. He told the crew of his decision and stated, “This is going to be a tough one, we have to almost come to a hover to land, so we have to get them on board as quick as possible before the VC can get our range.” He then said to SP5 Johnson,

“Egor, as soon as we land, through out that ammo, they will take care of it.” “OK guys, here we go!”

At about 500 meters from the pad, Captain Hill had to slow the helicopter while on final approach to the pad. Mr. Griffin turned the lights on the helipad so that the landing could be made without the aircraft lights. (This action, by the personnel at the Embassy, allowed Dust Off 75 to get on short final before the Viet Cong could see them).



Helipad on top of the Embassy, from the Back Parking Lot

Just before Dust Off 75 landed, it began receiving fire from the Parking Lot, and the crew could feel that the helicopter was taking hits. As no warning lights came on, they felt that the damage was only superficial. The Marines and Military Police began firing into the compound and due to the extremely effective fire from the Military Police M-60 at the back gate of Norodom Compound, Captain Hill was able to land the helicopter successfully.

SP5 Johnson noticed the individuals at the side of the helipad and motioned for them to come over to the helicopter as he thru out the ammunition that he had on the ship. Sergeant Soto pulled Corporal Zahuranic up the stairs and over to the helicopter. As soon as Corporal Zahuranic was loaded on to the helicopter, the medic began to work on him.

As Sergeant Soto and an individual from Page Electronics boarded, SP5 Johnson asked if there was anyone else to be evacuated from the building. They stated no, and SP5 Johnson stated on the intercom, “Sir, their on board, lets get out of here!”. It was at this time that the Viet Cong got the range of the helipad.

Captain Hill pulled pitch, and began nosing over the Dust Off ship to get transitional lift, the helicopter began getting many hits from the ground fire below. One round entered through the floor, only inches from Corporal Zahuranic’s hear. As Captain Hill reached flying speed and was gaining height, the Fire Warning Light came on along with the low RPM Warning Light. Hearing the alarm and seeing the lights, SP5 Johnson immediately climbed out on the skid and looked back at the engine. He stated to Captain Hill on the intercom, “Sir, there is no fire back there!”. Captain Hill after getting this information decided he was going to try to get to the 93<sup>rd</sup> Evacuation Hospital at Long Binh.



Long Bien Base, 93<sup>rd</sup> Evacuation Hospital is beside the Dust Off’s Helicopter Parking Area

Noticing that the aircraft was losing fuel rapidly, Captain Hill called Dust Off 72, Captain Craig Honoman, who had just launched from Long Binh, with instructions to meet him in the rice paddies south of Saigon in order to transfer the patients to his helicopter. The helicopter was flying with a vibration that seemed to be getting worse. SP5 Johnson told Captain Hill that it appears we also got hit in the blades, and said, "Sir, when we get down, don't shut down, I'll check the damage, and maybe we can still get back."

Minutes later, Captain Hill found a landing spot in the rice paddy and he could see Dust Off 72 only five miles away, making an approach also. As soon as the ship landed, the medic with the help of Sergeant Soto began moving Corporal Zahuranic to Captain Honoman's helicopter that landed within seconds of Dust Off 75. SP5 Johnson jumped out of the helicopter and immediately looked under the ship. Seeing several streams of fuel coming from large holes in the belly of the ship, he grabbed some rags that he kept behind his seat, crawled under the helicopter, and began stuffing the rags into the holes. He knew that even though the tanks had self sealing capability, the holes were too large to close before they lost all their fuel. Working swiftly, he plugged the holes, and the fuel flow slowed down. He could hear Dust Off 72 taking off as he crawled out from under the helicopter. The medic had just returned to the ship as SP5 Johnson plugged into the intercom system. He stated over the intercom, "Sir, we had better get the hell out of here, I have slowed the fuel flow but it is still leaking!" At this point Captain Hill pulled pitch and headed to Long Bien as fast as the helicopter could fly.

Dust Off 75 was landing when they saw Dust Off 72 on the 93<sup>rd</sup> Evacuation Hospital Helipad. They had just landed when the turbine engine died from fuel starvation. SP5 Johnson began checking the ship and found that they had taken eighty-seven hits from enemy fire during the mission. As he completed the damage inspection, Captain Hill came back out and stated, "Get your gear, we have another helicopter, and we have a mission at the Red Horse Compound. We know the area, so we get the mission" The crew grabbed their gear and headed to the new helicopter and began a flying day that was to last 27 hours.<sup>62</sup>



Dust Off unloading patients at a Medical Facility

## CHAPTER 6 – The End Game

### VEHICLE GATE- UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0640 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

As dawn was approaching, Captain O'Brien directed Sergeant Reed to make another attempt to get to the sedan and contact Gunnery Sergeant Morrison and request more Marines and ammunition. Sergeant Reed was able to make it to the sedan as the Vietnamese Police could see that he was an American. Gunnery Sergeant Morrison, at Marine House, then directed Sergeant Richard L. Johnson, Sergeant Joseph S. Wolff, and Sergeant D. Bothwell to take a re-supply of nine millimeter and .38 caliber ammunition to Captain O'Brien at the Vehicle Gate of the Embassy Compound.<sup>63</sup>

In anticipation of the coming dawn and incoming ammunition, Captain O'Brien again deployed his force along the rear wall and on the roof where Mr. Cramsey was still located. As Captain O'Brien and Sergeant Patullo attempted to climb the wall, Sergeant Patullo was hit in the thigh as he topped the wall. SP4 M9iles, aided by Captain O'Brien, pulled Sergeant Patullo off the wall. While placing a tourniquet on Sergeant Patullo's leg, Captain O'Brien directed Sergeant Fratarelli and Corporal Inemer to get him to 17<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital.

Shortly thereafter, Sergeant Bothwell, Sergeant Johnson, and Sergeant Wolff advanced to the rear of the Generator Building roof. They were then able to deliver a steady volume of fire, with the assistance of the Military Police M-60 crew toward the sappers located behind the cars in the Parking Lot.<sup>65</sup>

Sergeant Bothwell stationed at the side Vehicle Gate, fired on two Viet Cong who were at the far corner of the Chancery Building. Behind a pillar near the Chancery Building, the Viet Cong Sappers began firing at the team on top of the Generator Building. As the Sappers moved to relocate, Sergeant Johnson opened from his Beretta, forcing them to move for cover and providing the opportunity for Sergeant Reed to kill one member of this group. The other two

Viet Cong, who were out of Sergeant Reed's line of fire, must have assumed that Sergeant Johnson moved out of his previous position, because they moved around their cover and began firing. As Sergeant Johnson began firing a five round burst, the leading sapper went down, but managed to get to his feet and both moved around the opposite side of the building.

Having expended his supply of ammunition, Sergeant Wolff informed Sergeant Johnson that he was going down to Corporal Huss' position for an additional supply. After reaching the ground, Sergeant Wolff was pinned down by sniper fire. Sergeant Johnson and Sergeant Reed neutralized the Viet Cong fire coming from the rear parking lot, thereby enabling Sergeant Wolff to reach Corporal Huss' position, where he received a .45 caliber pistol and several magazines of ammunition from the Military Police.<sup>65</sup>

#### NORODOM COMPOUND – AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0650 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Lieutenant Ribich was able to make radio contact with WACO Net, the Military Police Net Control Station, and was informed that LTC George wanted them to assault the Embassy Compound. Lieutenant Ribich informed WACO that he needed to wait an additional fifteen minutes for daylight. Three minutes later, he received the order to go from LTC George.<sup>66</sup>

#### OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY – TRONG NHAT STREET – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0655 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Rivera, who was beside Lieutenant Ribich, moved to get his men ready. A South Vietnamese soldier came up and stated that he wanted to help. After checking his papers, Sergeant Rivera gave him an M-79 grenade launcher and instructed him to follow him.

MAIN GATE – UNITED STATES EMBASSY – TRONG NHAT STREET – SAIGON,  
VIETNAM

0700 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Lieutenant Ribich passed on the order from LTC George to Captain Chester, Commander of the 50 man Military Police Reaction Force from B Company, 716<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion to begin the assault. SP4 Paul Healey and Sergeant John Shook then took a Military Police Jeep to the Main Gate, shot the lock off, but the gate would not open. Sergeant Kuldass and several Military Policemen added weight to the vehicle, and the gate was forced open enough to allow entry, one at a time. For the next fifteen minutes, the Military Policemen moved along the wall and across the Front Compound, engaging the remaining Viet Cong in the Front Compound. As SP4 Healey and Sergeant Kuldass approached the Mission Coordinator's House, Colonel George D. Jacobson, stranded on the second floor, shouted that he was unarmed and the Viet Cong were on the lower floor. SP4 Healey then threw him a .45 caliber pistol and a CS gas grenade.<sup>67</sup>

REAR GATE – NORODOM COMPOUND – BY REAR PARKING AREA – UNITED  
STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0700 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Rivera's Reaction Force, Staff Sergeant Banks Marines, and the Military Police M-60 crew who had been covering this area, coming through the opening separating Norodom Compound from the Parking area, observed three Viet Cong. Sergeant Rivera opened fire along with the leading members of the assault force and all three of the Viet Cong were killed. One of the Viet Cong that had been killed was holding an AK-47 that continued to fire until the weapon was empty.

Hearing movement inside the Parking Area Shack, Sergeant Rivera entered the shack and found an old man, a woman, and a child. After searching them, he left one of his Military Policemen to guard this group while he continued to sweep the parking area. He then observed a Viet Cong Sapper by the Mission Coordinators House and opened fire. As another Viet Cong

ran into the basement, the South Vietnamese soldier, standing in the open, began firing M-79 grenades into the basement without regarding his own safety.

Sergeant Rivera, the Marines, and Military Policeman moved along the embassy wall, there they saw a Viet Cong Sapper who appeared to be dead. Suddenly, this Viet Cong moved and Sergeant Rivera emptied his magazine into him.<sup>68</sup>

#### ROOF OF BUILDINGS BEHIND THE AMERICAN EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0705 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Captain O'Brien along with Sergeant Boswell, Sergeant Johnson, Mr. Furey and Mr. Crampsey observed Staff Sergeant Banks, his team and the Military Police entering the Parking Area as they began their assault. They moved over the rear wall and down from the Generator roof and linked up with Staff Sergeant Banks group. The combined force now swept across the back yard of the Embassy toward the Mission Coordinators House, where the last of the VC had holed up. Upon reaching the Mission Coordinator's House, Mr. Furey told Captain O'Brien that Sergeant Boswell had been hit on the front porch while trying to enter the house.

#### MISSION COORDINATORS HOUSE – UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0720 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Kuldias and SP4 Healy entered the bottom floor of the Mission Coordinators House. Hearing noises in the kitchen area and believing it was more Viet Cong, Sergeant Kuldias threw a hand grenade into the area. After the explosion, SP4 Healy could still hear voices and threw another grenade. Following the second explosion, Sergeant Kuldias heard shots from upstairs, where Colonel Jacobson had just killed another Viet Cong Sapper.<sup>69</sup>

Captain O'Brien ran crouching along the front porch where he saw Sergeant Bothwell laying. He could hear the firing and grenades going off inside the house, so he started to drag him to a more secure area when someone shouted, "grenade". He crouched low and the grenade

went off close by wounding Captain O'Brien. Sergeant Miles one of the Military Policemen, came and assisted Captain O'Brien pull Sergeant Bothwell down the steps to cover. At this point the CS Gas that SP4 Healy thru reached their area and Captain O'Brien placed a gas mask on Sergeant Bothwell, which he had received from the Military Police. The battle had subsided and Mr. Crampsey come over to where they were and with the assistance of the Military Police, Sergeant Bothwell was placed on a stretcher and sent to the 17<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital in an ambulance.

#### OUTSIDE MISSION COORDINATORS HOUSE – UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0720 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Lieutenant Ribich and Captain Chester coordinating the attack and clearing the Front Embassy Compound became aware that a CS grenade had went off in the Mission Coordinator's House. Overcome by the CS gas, SP4 Healey staggered out of the door. Lieutenant Ribich went to his aid and helped him to the side of the Embassy.

By this time, Sergeant Kuldas had insured that the Mission Coordinator's House was cleared of Sappers and began a sweep of the back parking lot, meeting up with Sergeant Rivera's force. This sweep verified that all of the Viet Cong Sappers in that area had been killed.<sup>69</sup>

#### UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0730 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

General William C. Westmoreland arrived at the Embassy by car. As he pulled up, two helicopters, carrying a platoon of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, set down on the roof. General Westmoreland went to the top floor of the Embassy to meet with the Commander of the platoon. After completing this meeting, General Westmoreland headed for the Communications Room where called Mr. Phillip Habib, the Assistant Secretary of State, in Washington, DC.<sup>70</sup>

## AREA NEAR THE VEHICLE GATE – UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0745 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

While sweeping the area near the Vehicle Gate, Sergeant Rivera observed the bodies of SP4 Daniel and Private First Class Sabast. He covered their bodies with a poncho, and continued checking the area. A few minutes later he observed a Press Reporter going over to the bodies, he removed the poncho, and started taking pictures. When Sergeant Rivera saw this action, he ran over to the reporter and grabbed his camera. After stating that he did not want the families of these men to see them like this, Sergeant Rivera destroyed the camera.<sup>71</sup>

## REAR PARKING AREA – UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0745 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

While continuing their sweep of the back Parking Area, Sergeant Kuldias, Corporal Moyer, and SP4 Singer, noticed blood stains on the fence wall beside the Embassy. Footprints on the wall made it evident that a Sapper had tried to scale the wall. Sergeant Kuldias and SP4 Singer proceeded around the building and entered Norodom Compound, while Corporal Moyer was left in front of the Office Building in case they flushed out the wounded Viet Cong. As Sergeant Kuldias and SP4 Singer proceeded down the walkway between the building and the wall to the Dog Run, they saw an AK-47 Rifle and blood in the middle of the run. Apparently unaware that a dog was in the area, the Sapper had climbed the wall and been attacked by the dog. Retrieving the AK-47, Sergeant Kuldias followed the bloody trail to a doorway in the Office Building. Inside the building, they followed the blood trail down the hall to a locked door. Sergeant Kuldias opened fire of the door, it flew open and the Viet Cong was standing in a Map Room with his hands in the air. Shaking him down, Sergeant Kuldias found a Consulate Identification Card and then took him to the front of Norodom Compound, where he was placed in the custody of the ambulance personnel at the gate. He then returned to the Office Building, where he made a thorough search.

## CHAPTER 7 – The Battle is Won

### IN FRONT OF THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0800 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

General William C. Westmoreland had just completed a few remarks to the assembled news media, when Sergeant Rivera had come to the front of the building. A Press Reporter approached him and said, “The MP’s did more damage to the American Embassy than the Viet Cong.” Having been friends with all four dead Military Policemen, Sergeant Rivera became first angry and then began to cry. Lieutenant Ribich was calming him down, (Sergeant Rivera wanted to shoot the reporter), when Captain Sampson, who was General Westmoreland’s Aid, came over and stated, “I’m sorry you had to hear that, you men did a great job.” Lieutenant Ribich said to Sergeant Rivera, “It’s over Poncho, we had better get our people home.” With this these two Military Policemen who had fought along side of the valorous Marine Security Guards through this long night, gathered their men and went home. This was only the beginning for in the next 72 hours they would be involved in many more fights.<sup>73</sup>

### UNITED STATES EMBASSY – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0900 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

After a complete search of all the buildings by the Military Police and Marine Security Guards, the American Embassy was declared secure. Military Policemen returned to their companies, only to be dispatched again and again to other firefights. At the Embassy, Nineteen Viet Cong Sappers from the elite C-10 Sapper Battalion, were know dead, and one Viet Cong Sapper captured along with the loss of four Military Policemen and one Marine Security Guard.<sup>74</sup>

## MARINE HOUSE – SAIGON, VIETNAM

0930 hours, Wednesday, January 31, 1968

Sergeant Ariola contacted Gunnery Sergeant Morrison and advised him that the Ambassador wished to come to the Embassy. Gunnery Sergeant Morrison attempted to dissuade the Ambassador until Mr. Crampsey gave the okay. The Ambassador returned instead to his residence where he dressed and returned to the Embassy later in the morning.

### POSTSCRIPT

Although the attack on the American Embassy was only a small portion of the overall picture during the Battle of Saigon, the events of the seventy-two hours that the Military Police held the primary responsibility for defending this city were even more remarkable. The city of Saigon came under attack during the TET Holidays, which represents the equivalent of Christmas, New Years, Thanksgiving, the Fourth of July, Family Reunions, and the highest religious holiday, combined into one celebration. The significance of this celebration was reflected in the reduction of the strength of the South Vietnamese Army. Saigon was attacked by a total of fourteen enemy battalions and defended by South Vietnamese Army units at 50% strength thereby limiting their effectiveness.

The 716<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion, augmented by platoons from the 92<sup>nd</sup> Military Police Battalion and the Saigon Support Command troop personnel, was task with the defense of Saigon during the first critical hours.<sup>75</sup>

As noted by General Albin F. Irzyk, during his staff conference of February 8, 1968, the Military Police played a vital role in the defense of the city. He stated, “Our front line troops were the Military Police. They were magnificent, superb. Any superlative one can think of could be applied to the MP’s. They were simply magnificent. You cannot realize how many request came in for their services. Everyone it seemed was under fire, everyone was under attack. The MP’s were going in dozens of directions at the same time. That battalion was like a rubber band that was stretched to the limit. Not only were they a truly outstanding MP Battalion, but they were an outstanding tactical battalion as well... So we defended the American part of

Saigon' the MP's backed up by the HAC reserves. We defended the American part of Saigon, but we did more. The MP's were engaging in tactical skirmishes, doing tactical jobs that were far beyond their mission, simply because there wasn't anyone else to do them. The result: We had no installations lost or damaged, no key individuals lost. As far as Saigon is concerned, we accomplished our mission. We had always been prepared for reaction to terrorist attacks; maybe a bomb at a hotel or two bombs at two hotels, a few people throwing hand grenades or a group of people shooting small arms, hit and run attacks, but never in our wildest imagination did we expect such a widespread attack of such magnitude, of such strength.

This command is a support type command, but for many hours it was the only tactical command in town. It accomplished its tactical mission which it inherited because there was no one else to do the job. That is the combat side of HAC..."<sup>76</sup>

As a direct result of this action, on February 4, 1969, one year after the opening of the battle, President Richard M. Nixon, as one of his first acts, signed the order awarding the 716<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion and attached units, which included the 527<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company, Company C, 52<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, and the 90<sup>th</sup> Military Police Detachment, the Presidential Unit Citation. In further recognition of the deeds of these dedicated men, the Government of South Vietnam awarded them the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm.<sup>77</sup>

Traditionally, the role of the Military Police has been viewed as the antithesis of the combat soldier. Nevertheless, history has proven otherwise. From the Battle of Springfield during the American Revolution, to the Argonne Woods of France in World War I, down the beach heads and Remagan Bridge in World War II, and on to the Chosan Reservoir during the Korean War, Military Policemen have been called upon to demonstrate the versatility of their abilities which culminated in the defense of the American Embassy during the TET Offensive of 1968.





DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

**Lineage and Honors**

HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS DETACHMENT  
716th MILITARY POLICE BATTALION

Constituted 10 January 1942 in the Army of the United States as the 716th Military Police Battalion

Activated 15 January 1942 at Fort Wadsworth, New York

Allotted 27 October 1950 to the Regular Army

Reorganized and redesignated 29 March 1973 as Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 716th Military Police Battalion (Companies A, B, and C concurrently inactivated in Vietnam)

CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION CREDIT

Vietnam

Defense	Tet 69/Counteroffensive
Counteroffensive	Summer-Fall 1969
Counteroffensive, Phase II	Winter-Spring 1970
Counteroffensive, Phase III	Sanctuary Counteroffensive
Tet Counteroffensive	Counteroffensive, Phase VII
Counteroffensive, Phase IV	Consolidation I
Counteroffensive, Phase V	Consolidation II
Counteroffensive, Phase VI	Vietnam Cease-Fire

DECORATIONS

Presidential Unit Citation (Army), Streamer embroidered SAIGON-TET OFFENSIVE

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered AMERICAN THEATER

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1966

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1968

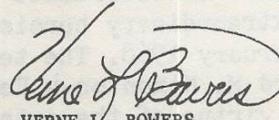
HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS DETACHMENT  
716th MILITARY POLICE BATTALION

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1968-1969

Navy Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered SAIGON

Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM  
1965-1968

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:



VERNE J. BOWERS  
Major General, USA  
The Adjutant General

General Orders

No. 17

HEADQUARTERS  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Washington, D.C., 17 March 1969

PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION ..... section I

\* \* \* \* \*

I PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION (ARMY). 1. Award of the Presidential Unit Citation (Army) by the President of the United States of America to the following unit of the Armed Forces of the United States is confirmed in accordance with paragraph 194, AR 672-5-1. The award is for extraordinary heroism during the period 31 January 1968 to 10 February 1968. The text of the citation, signed by President Richard M. Nixon on 4 February 1969, reads as follows:

By virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States and as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States I have today awarded the Presidential Unit Citation (Army) for extraordinary heroism to:

716TH MILITARY POLICE BATTALION  
AND ATTACHED UNITS INCLUDING:

527TH MILITARY POLICE COMPANY  
COMPANY C, 52ND INFANTRY

90TH MILITARY POLICE DETACHMENT

OF THE 18TH MILITARY POLICE BRIGADE  
UNITED STATES ARMY AND THE UNITED STATES  
ARMY HEADQUARTERS' AREA COMMAND SECURITY  
GUARD COMPANY (PROVISIONAL)

**FILE**

The 716th Military Police Battalion and attached units, although not organized for a tactical combat mission, were instrumental in the defense of Saigon during the TET Offensive. The Battalion employed aggressive police and combat tactics with the utmost skill and dispatch. The use of preplanned rapid reaction forces against a highly coordinated enemy attack was a key contributing factor to the success of the operation. Within six hours after the initial enemy attack, over 800 members of the Battalion had been committed to action throughout the city. Although the Battalion was engaged with the Viet Cong in four major battle areas in Saigon, there were many small patrols in contact with the enemy in the streets, in buildings and on rooftops. Radio contact was extremely difficult, making command and patrol virtually impossible. However, the personnel of the Battalion acted promptly and aggressively, thus successfully delaying and pushing back the enemy until reinforcements arrived. Drawing from their knowledge of the city, the Battalion and its attached units planned

and conducted counterattacks using every means at their disposal. By the timely employment of reaction forces, they were able to neutralize the Viet Cong attack on the United States Embassy and the Vietnamese Joint General Staff Headquarters. The continuous dispatch and routing of military police patrols enabled the Battalion to respond quickly to requests for aid and drive off enemy forces. Even though the effort of the Battalion was fragmented, it did not lose control of the situation. And in addition, the Battalion was able to support the Vietnamese Army and National Police in successfully blunting an enemy main effort and preventing the reinforcement of Viet Cong units. In all instances, the personnel of the 716th Military Police Battalion and attached units defended all areas of responsibility and responded to enemy activity under extremely difficult and hazardous conditions, displaying the highest degree of gallantry and determination. The heroism displayed by all members of the 716th Military Police Battalion was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit on the Military Police Corps and the United States Army.

\* \* \* \* \*

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

W. C. WESTMORELAND  
General, United States Army,  
Chief of Staff.

Official:

KENNETH G. WICKHAM  
Major General, United States Army,  
The Adjutant General.

"A TRUE EXTRACT COPY"

*Wayne L. Skalen*  
WAYNE L. SKALEN  
CW3 USA

General Orders

No. 31

HEADQUARTERS  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Washington, D.C. 13 May 1969

VIETNAMESE CROSS OF GALLANTRY WITH PALM .....Section V

\* \* \* \* \*

V. VIETNAMESE CROSS OF GALLANTRY WITH PALM. 3. The Cross of Gallantry with Palm has been awarded by the Government of the Republic of Vietnam for outstanding service during the period 17 April 1965 through 18 April 1968 to:

THE 716TH MILITARY POLICE BATTALION

The 716th Military Police Battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Gordon D. Rowe, has proved to be an outstanding, combat-experienced unit which always displays a gallant fighting spirit. While operating in Vietnam from 17 April 1965 to 18 April 1968, the 716th Military Police Battalion has cooperated closely with military police units, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, in maintaining security, controlling traffic and protecting vital installations in the city of Saigon, against Viet Cong sabotage and terrorist activities. In particular, during the Viet Cong offensive against Saigon on the occasion of "Tet Mau Than" (1968), although the situation was then extremely critical, the units of the 716th Military Police Battalion reacted quickly and, along with friendly units, fiercely resisted the enemy, thus blocking the enemy's infiltration attempts. The men of the 716th Military Police Battalion were exceptionally outstanding in action at Gate 5 of the Joint General Staff Headquarters at Camp Tran Hung Dao, at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, at the Phu Tho Race Track in Cholon and at the Headquarters, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, at Tan Son Nhut. During the first 2 days of fighting in Saigon, the men of the 716th Military Police Battalion killed 86 Viet Cong. Furthermore, from 1 to 10 February 1968, United States military police units provided effective support for Vietnamese military police units and civilian security agencies during police operations designed to eliminate concealed Viet Cong guerrillas, thus making effective contributions to the maintenance of security for Saigon. With these outstanding achievements, the men of the 716th Military Police Battalion enhanced the heroic traditions of the Military Police Branch and brought distinct credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

\* \* \* \* \*

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

W. C. WESTMORELAND  
General, United States Army,  
Chief of Staff

Official:  
KENNETH G. WICKHAM  
Major General, United States Army,  
The Adjutant General.

"A TRUE EXTRACT COPY"

*Thayne L. Skeen*  
THAYNE L. SKEEN  
CW3 USA

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1984--746-007/11603 Region #4

#### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Colonel Hoang Ngoc Lung, "The General Offensive of 1968-69," Monograph, U. S. Army Center of Military History, Washington, D. C., p. 24.
- <sup>2</sup>General William C. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, Doubleday & Co., 1976, pp. 310-311; Lung, "The General Offensive of 1968-69," pp. 14-20; "The Man Who Planned the Offensive," Time, February 9, 1968, p. 26.
- <sup>3</sup>Brigadier General Albin F. Irzyk, interview by telephone from his home in West Palm Beach, Florida, November 1981; U. S. Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, "Daily Staff Journal, 30 January 1968," pp. 1-2.
- <sup>4</sup>U. S. Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, "Daily Staff Journal, 30 January 1968," pp. 1-2.
- <sup>5</sup>Marine Security Guard Detachment, "Viet Cong Attack on the American Embassy, 31 January 1968," Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by LTC Robert J. O'Brien.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., statement by Sgt. Raymond P. Schuepfer.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., statement by LTC Robert J. O'Brien.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., statement by Sgt. Ronald W. Harper and Sgt. Rudy A. Soto, Jr.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., statement by Sgt. Raymond P. Schuepfer.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., statement by Sgt. Ronald W. Harper; "The VC's Week of Terror," Newsweek, 12 February 1968, p. 24; "The Battle of Bunker's Bunker," Time, 9 February 1968, p. 23; E. Allen Wendt, "Saigon Dairy," Wall Street Journal, 3 November 1981, p. 18.
- <sup>11</sup>Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Sgt. Rudy A. Soto.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., statement by Lance Corporal James P. Wilson.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., statement by Corporal Dennis L. Ryan.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., statement by Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. O'Brien; statement by Sergeant Richard C. Frattarelli.

- <sup>15</sup> Ibid., statement by Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks; statement by Sgt. Joseph J. Haas; statement by Sgt. James W. Jimerson, Jr.
- <sup>16</sup> General William C. Westmoreland, interview by telephone from his home in Charleston, South Carolina, October 1981.
- <sup>17</sup> Colonel Richard E. George, interview by telephone from his home in Mukilteo, Washington, August 1981.
- <sup>18</sup> Sergeant First Class Arthur Rivera, interview at the United States Army Military Police School, Fort McClellan, Al., September 1981; U. S. Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, "Daily Staff Journal, 31 June 1968," p. 1.
- <sup>19</sup> Major Frank Ribich, interview at the United States Army Military Police School, Fort McClellan, Al., September 1981.
- <sup>20</sup> Rivera, interview, Military Police School.
- <sup>21</sup> Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statements made by Sgt. James W. Jimerson, Jr., Corporal Dennis L. Ryan, and Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks.
- <sup>22</sup> Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. O'Brien; statement by Sgt. Richard A. Frattarelli.
- <sup>23</sup> Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; U. S. Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, "Daily Staff Journal, 31 January 1968," p. 2.
- <sup>24</sup> Department of State Telegram Number 799, Saigon, Vietnam, 31 January 1968.
- <sup>25</sup> Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; U. S. Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, "Daily Staff Journal, 31 January 1968," p. 2.
- <sup>26</sup> Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Corporal Richard L. Huss.
- <sup>27</sup> Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68; statement by Corporal Dennis L. Ryan; Department of the Army, 46th Military History Detachment, "Summation of Combat Activities Involving Military Police During the Period 30 January to 6 February 1968, RVN," 6 June 1969, p. 1.
- <sup>28</sup> Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; Sergeant First Class Rivera, interview, September 1981.

- <sup>29</sup> Sergeant First Class Rivera, interview, September 1981.
- <sup>30</sup> Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement of Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.
- <sup>31</sup> Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Gunnery Sergeant Allen Morrison; statement by Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.
- <sup>32</sup> Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; Sgt. Ronald W. Harper, interview by telephone at his home in Willmar, Minnesota, January 1983.
- <sup>33</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Thomas W. Hill, interview by telephone at his home in San Antonio, Texas, December 1981; Department of State Telegram No. 799, 31 January 1968.
- <sup>34</sup> Department of State Telegram No. 799, 31 January 1968.
- <sup>35</sup> Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Gunnery Sergeant Allen Morrison; Department of State Telegram No. 799, 31 January 1968.
- <sup>36</sup> Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks; statement by Corporal Richard L. Huss; statement by Lance Corporal Warren D. Caudle.
- <sup>37</sup> Marine Security Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Sergeant James W. Jimerson, Jr.; statement by Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks; statement by Lance Corporal Warren D. Caudle.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., statement by Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., statement by Sergeant James W. Jimerson, Jr.; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.
- <sup>40</sup> Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. O'Brien; statement by Sgt. Richard C. Frattarelli; statement by Gunnery Sergeant Allen Morrison.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., statement by Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. O'Brien; First Sergeant Harold Cockran, interview at the Military Police School, Ft. McClellan, Al., February 1982 and March 1983.

- <sup>42</sup> Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Corporal Dennis L. Ryan.
- <sup>43</sup> Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.
- <sup>44</sup> Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Corporal Dennis L. Ryan; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., statement by Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks; statement by Sergeant Ronald W. Harper.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., statement by Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., statement by Gunnery Sergeant Allen Morrison; statement by Master Sergeant Leroy L. Banks; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.
- <sup>48</sup> Master Sergeant Rob Kuldass, interview by telephone at his office, Provost Marshal Sergeant Major, Ft. Hood, Texas, October 1981; Interview Colonel Richard E. George, August 1981.
- <sup>49</sup> Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Sergeant Ronald W. Harper.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., statement by Gunnery Sergeant Allen Morrison; statement by Sergeant Richard L. Johnson; statement by Sergeant Joseph S. Wolff.
- <sup>51</sup> Department of State Telegram No. 799, 31 January 1968.
- <sup>52</sup> Master Sergeant Rob Kuldass, interview, October 1981.
- <sup>53</sup> Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; Sergeant First Class Arthur Rivera, interview, September 1981.
- <sup>54</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Thomas W. Hill, interview, December 1981.
- <sup>55</sup> Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Sergeant Richard G. Frattarelli.
- <sup>56</sup> Interview with Major Frank Ribich, September 1981; U. S. Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, "Daily Staff Journal, 31 January 1968," p. 2.
- <sup>57</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Thomas W. Hill, interview, December 1981; Department of State Telegram No. 441, 31 January 1968.

<sup>58</sup>Department of State Telegram No. 799, 31 January 1968; Department of State Telegram 441, 31 January 1968.

<sup>59</sup>Interview with Major Frank Ribich, September 1981.

<sup>60</sup>Department of State Telegram No. 799, 31 January 1968.

<sup>61</sup>Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Lance Corporal James P. Wilson.

<sup>62</sup>Lieutenant Colonel Thomas W. Hill, interview, December 1981; Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Sergeant Rudy A. Soto, Jr.

<sup>63</sup>Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Sergeant Raymond E. Reed.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., statement by Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. O'Brien; First Sergeant Harold Cockran, interview, March 1983.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., statement by Sergeant Raymond E. Reed, statement by Sergeant Richard L. Johnson; statement by Sergeant Joseph S. Wolff.

<sup>66</sup>Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.

<sup>67</sup>Sergeant First Class Arthur Rivera, interview, September 1981; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; Master Sergeant Rob Kuldass, interview, December 1981.

<sup>68</sup>Sergeant First Class Arthur Rivera, interview, September 1981.

<sup>69</sup>Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; Master Sergeant Rob Kuldass, interview, December 1981.

<sup>70</sup>General William C. Westmoreland, interview, October 1981; Department of State Telegram No. 799 and 839.

<sup>71</sup>Sergeant First Class Arthur Rivera, interview, September 1981.

<sup>72</sup>Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Sergeant H. Dean Spersrud; Master Sergeant Rob Kuldass, interview, December 1981.

<sup>73</sup>Sergeant First Class Arthur Rivera, interview, September 1981; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.

<sup>74</sup>Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; Department of State Telegram No. 799 and 839.

<sup>75</sup>Lung, "The General Offensive of 1968-69," p. 54; Department of the Army, Headquarters United States Army Headquarters Area Command, Staff Memo No. 5, 8 February 1968, pp. 2-3; Brigadier General Karl W. Gustafson, Letter to Major Carl C. Turner, Provost Marshal General, Saigon, Vietnam, 18 February 1968.

<sup>76</sup>Department of the Army, Headquarters United States Army Headquarters Area Command, Staff Memo. No. 5, 8 February 1968.

<sup>77</sup>Department of the Army, General Order No. 31, 13 May 1969; Department of the Army, General Order No. 17, 17 March 1969.

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