



Associated Press Wirephoto  
U.S. Air Force personnel examine damage to plane hit during Viet Cong attack on Tan Son Nhut air base

## Death of a war dog

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*'I had a notion he'd be shot'*

SAIGON, (AP)—A German shepherd dog named Rebel, hurling his 100 pounds of bone and muscle at the shadowy figures moving in the grass, was the first line of defense.

Rebel's strong jaws snapped across the throat of one of the Viet Cong infiltrators, stifling a scream. His hind legs kicked at the midriff of another.

But Rebel, a sentry dog, was soon dead.

"When I let him loose,

I had a notion that he might get shot," said his handler Airman 2C Leroy Marsh, of Groton, N. Y., one of the sentries who patrol the blackness of Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport every night, beyond the floodlit jet airstrips.

Marsh, 23, blond and slim, added sadly, "but I had to send Rebel out there. The Viets were all around, I had to throw in everything, the dog, shots. I had to make

time so the others could organize."

Two other sentry dogs were killed as they tried to stem the surge of a Viet Cong suicide force across the northwest corner of Tan Son Nhut air base yesterday.

The dogs were gunned down as the infiltrators began a headlong rush to cross the main airport runway, maneuver past the line of sand-

(Please turn to Page 8, Col. 3)

(Continued from Page 1)

bagged bunkers that make up the main line of defense, and penetrate the flight line where scores of jet fighters and transport aircraft are located.

Only one Viet Cong got through, testimony to the bold defense of 50 American air policemen who fought the determined guerillas to a standstill, killing 18 of them and capturing four.

#### FIRST SIGHTING

Airman Marsh, patrolling off the northwest end of the main 10,000-foot airstrip, was the first to notice the infiltrators.

"They were padding along 50 yards out," he said. "Rebel didn't alert me because the wind was blowing in the wrong direction. But he saw them when I did."

Marsh called urgently into his radio, unclipped Rebel's leash, and slithered back to his waist-high sandbagged bunker. A grenade blasted the silence, fragments hitting Marsh's section leader who was driving 100 yards away.

"Then it all came in—mortars, rockets, grenades, machinegun fire," Marsh said. "I dropped to my knees and kept firing."

Half a mile away, another patrol sentry, Airman 2C Larry Laudner, from Rockford, Iowa, heard the grenade explode, and the clatter that followed.

"I dropped to my knees and jumped into a ditch, busting my radio," Laudner said. "I looked back and I saw maybe 20 Viet Cong, but they fooled me at first. They were

moving in military formation, they looked like regular army troopers," he said.

The sentry challenged the group. "They dropped to the ground which is not so unusual. Then I told them I had a dog and that they had to identify themselves. I was still thinking they were ours," Laudner said.

When no reply came from the group, he let his German Shepherd dog, Cubby, loose.

"Cubby moved out about 20 yards, then he cut in and I knew he was on to something. I heard a scuffle, a yell, then I saw Cubby spin out, and an automatic weapon firing. I opened up with full automatic, sweeping from the left to right. I think I killed two or three," Laudner said.

Neither Laudner nor Marsh were hit as the Viet Cong infiltrators swept past them towards the main line of defense, the air police bunkers spaced 20 yards apart on the flight-line side of the main airstrip. Each of the bunkers held one M60 machine gun and two automatic rifles. These weapons cut the attacking Viet Cong to pieces.

Airman 3C John Walker, 19, of Los Angeles had been in Vietnam for only a few days and was serving his first night on duty, manning a bunker.

"I was being briefed on procedures outside the bunker when the shooting started. Two Viet Cong got within 20 yards and we gunned them down. We killed others, too. I expected trouble in Vietnam but not so soon. I'll be out there again tonight," Walker said.

The main fight lasted 30 minutes, with the American force of 50 air police bearing the brunt of the action in the main line of defense. Three Americans were killed, five wounded.

The Viet Cong left 18 dead behind them. The bullet ridden bodies, dressed in flimsy black shorts, some without shirts, were gathered from around the bunkers at day break.

Amongst them were the carcasses of the three sentry dogs.