

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE MILITARY POLICE CORPS REGIMENTS

TONKIN
NORTH
VIET NAM

ASSAULT ON THE AMERICAN EMBASSY TET 1968

LAN D (AM)

CAMBODIA

SOUTH
VIET NAM

T. JOHNSON

M.R. HIMES

MeKong River
Vinh
Ba Dong
Hoi Trung
Vinh Chau
Con Son, Con Son Islands

North Reef
Crescent Group
Discovery Reef
Triton I.
Pyramid Rock
Lincoln I.
Fairy Cross Reef
Royal Bishop Bank
Astralabe Banks
Catwick Islands
Western Reef
Discovery Great Reef
Discovery Reef
Fairy Cross Reef
Ladd Reef
Loophead Reef
Charteron Reef

Historical Account of the Military Police Corps Regiment
Assault on the American Embassy
TET-1968

By
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United States Army
Military Police Corps Regimental Museum

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Department of the Army
US Army Military Police and Chemical Schools
Training Center and Fort McClellan
Fort McClellan, Alabama, 36205

Foreword

for

Historical Account of the Military Police Corps Regiment Assault on the American Embassy

TET 1968

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, large 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 American Military Policeman met the challenge.

Then, during the first hours of 31 January 1968, that challenge multiplied 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, ununiformed 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.

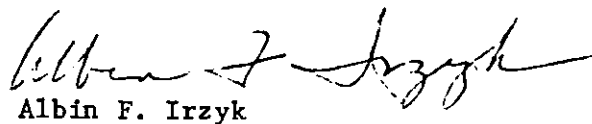
I had the privilege and honor rarely accorded a non-M.P. Officer. I had Operational Command of the American Military Police forces in Saigon. Their performance as combat troopers can be described in only the most glowing of superlatives.

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 Police-
men who fought and died so courageously on the grounds of the U.S. Embassy
in Saigon in 1968.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Albin F. Irzyk". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Albin F. Irzyk

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

Foreword


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 BILLETTS UNDER SEIGE; 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 RECAPTURE 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 716TH 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 716TH 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, CAPTURED 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 716TH MILITARY POLICE BATTALION AND THE 90TH MILITARY POLICE DETACHMENT (PM) WERE AWARDED THE PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION AND INDIVIDUAL AWARDS INCLUDED ONE DSC, 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 THE 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, ONE 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
COL, MPC, US ARMY (RETIRED)





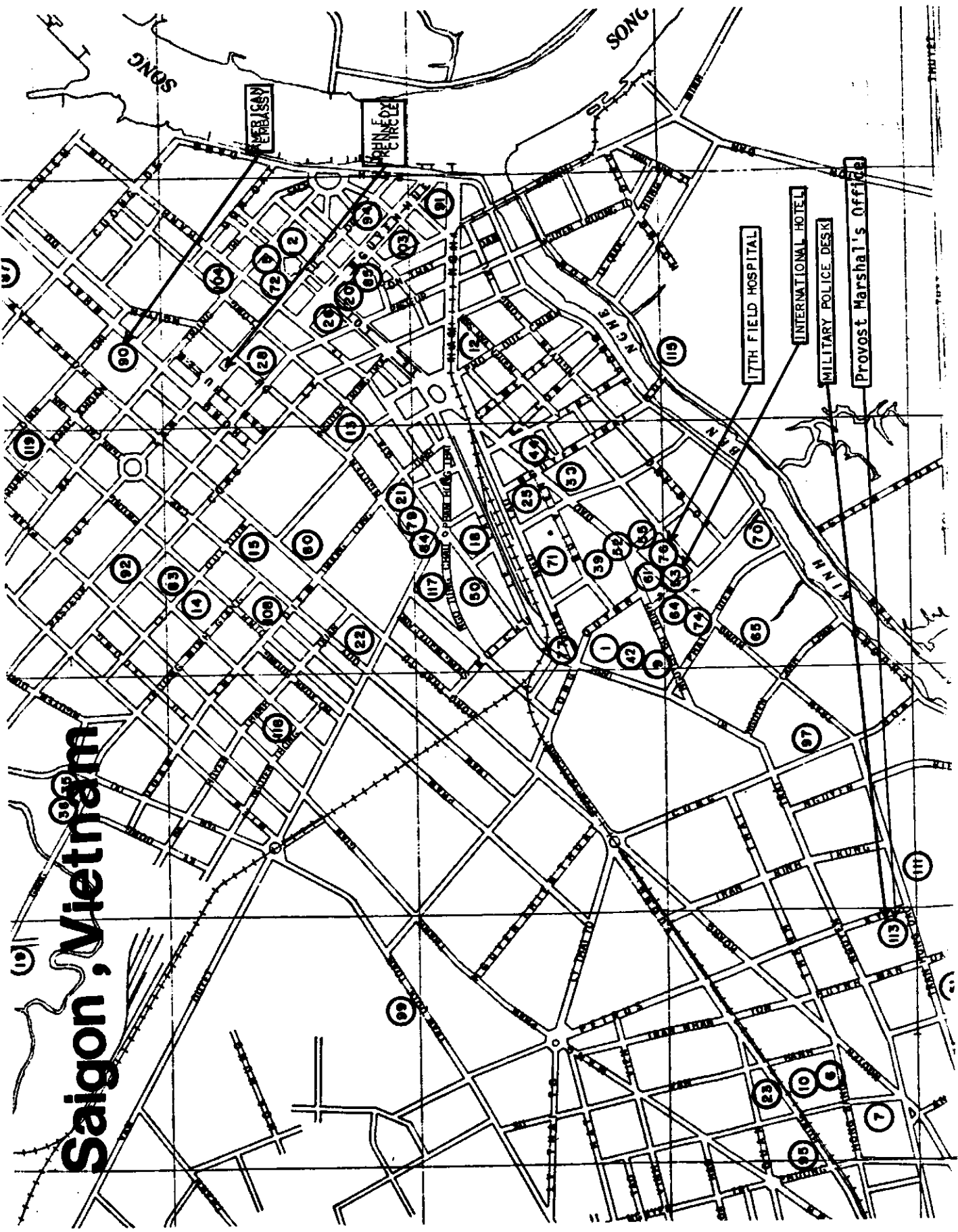
Acknowledgements

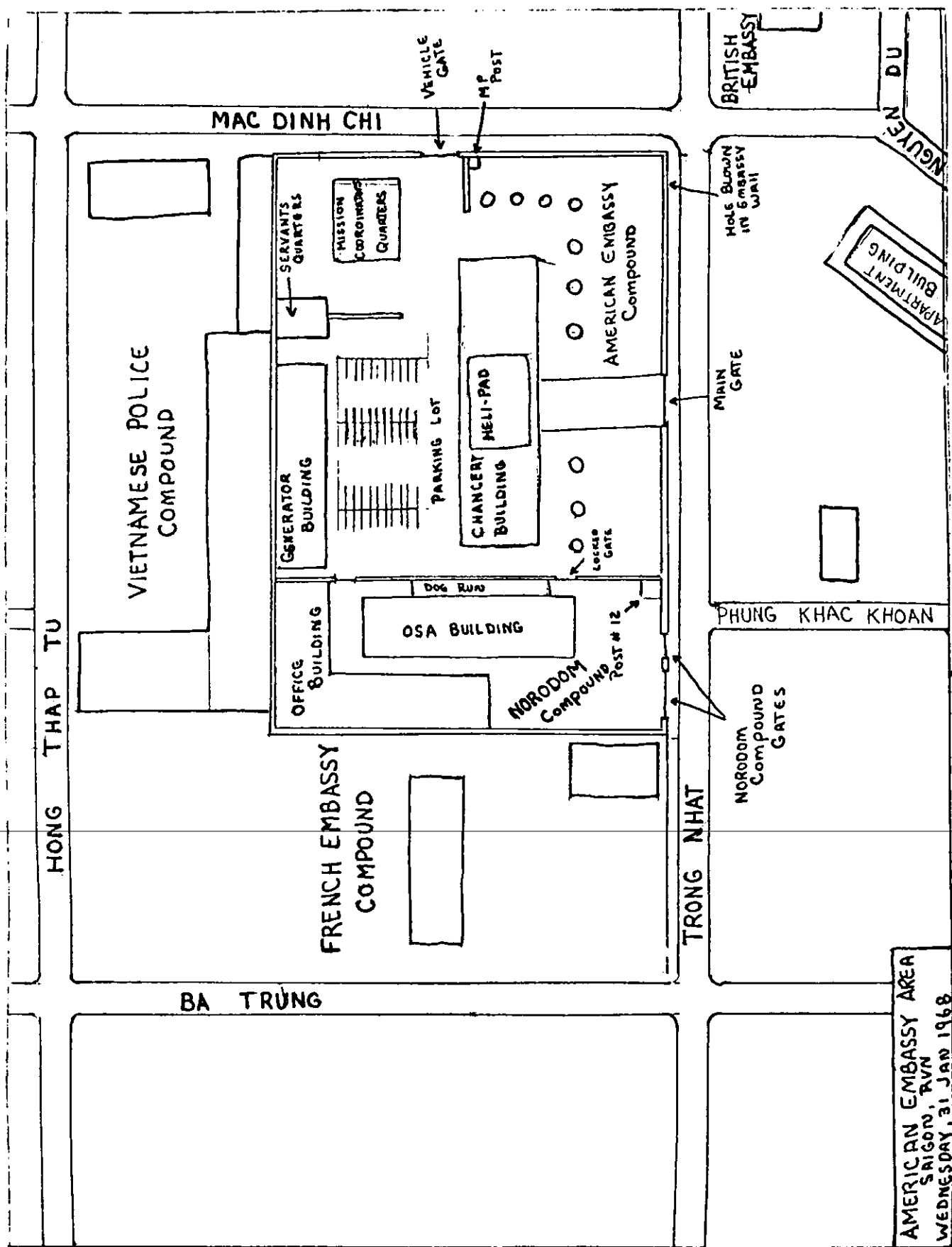
The authors of this historical manuscript would like to express their profound gratitude to not only the contributors to this history but also the organizations and individuals without whose support this project could not have been completed.

As with any historical endeavor, when a period of thirteen years has transpired, the author has to rely on many sources of information. In this regard, the United States Marine Corps Historical Center provided us 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 to supply us 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 this work, we could not conclude without expressing our thanks: Mrs. Judy T. Smitherman who graciously helped compile and type the initial draft of this history; Colonel John Blewett whose advice and support were instrumental in the formulation of this project; Sergeant Major William McBride whose technical advice has been invaluable; Lieutenant Colonel Charles Donovan 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 helping to locate historical documents relating to the 716th Military Police Battalion; and Mrs. Virginia Crossen, Military Police Corps Regimental Museum Technician, who supported our efforts by typing the final draft.

We wish to dedicate this historical document to the members of the United States Army Military Police Corps Regiment and the five valiant men who so unselfishly gave their lives in this proud chapter of the Corp's history.

Saigon, Vietnam





HONG THAP TU

MAC DINH CHI

BA TRUNG

TRONG NHAT

VIETNAMESE POLICE COMPOUND

FRENCH EMBASSY COMPOUND

NORODOM Compound

AMERICAN EMBASSY Compound

OFFICE BUILDING

OSA BUILDING

GENERATOR BUILDING

CHANCERY BUILDING

SERVANTS QUARTERS

MISSION CORORINGS QUARTERS

PARKING LOT

HELI-PAD

LOCKED GATE

MAIN GATE

PHUNG KHAC KHOAN

NORODOM Compound GATES

VEHICLE GATE

M.P. Post

BRITISH EMBASSY

NGUYEN DU

APARTMENT BUILDING

HOLE BLOWN IN EMBASSY WALL

AMERICAN EMBASSY AREA
SAIGON, RVN
WEDNESDAY, 31 JAN 1968

The events which unfolded, beginning in the early morning hours, 31 January 1968, in the city of Saigon, South Vietnam, have written a proud chapter in the history of the Military Police 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. 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 Joint General Staff, was totally defeated and that in fact no major objective was taken by the enemy forces. The ability of the Military Police to effectively utilize various size reaction forces, consisting of not much more than a reinforced squad to counter enemy thrusts throughout the city, has shown the value of the Military Policeman as a member of the combat team.

As with any major offensive, the Battle of Saigon began months earlier when the government in Hanoi came to believe that the South Vietnamese population would support a popular uprising to overthrow the South Vietnamese government. This belief was enhanced by the presidential election in the fall of 1967 when 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.¹

A major factor in the development of the plans for this ill-fated offensive unfolded in July 1967 when General Nguyen Chi Thanh was fatally wounded during a B-52 strike against his headquarters in Cambodia. 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 their 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 win the war.²

During the mid-morning of Tuesday, 30 January 1968, Brigadier General Albin F. Irzyk, the Saigon area commander, received a phone call from General William C. Westmoreland informing him of the intelligence estimate which supported Westmoreland's belief that there were currently Viet Cong sapper units within the city. General Westmoreland further stated that he believed these units would begin attacks against installations within the Saigon area during the next forty-eight hours. Brigadier General Irzyk immediately contacted Lieutenant Colonel Richard E. George, the Saigon area Provost Marshal, and Lieutenant Colonel Gordon D. Rowe, commander, 716th Military Police Battalion. As soon as Lieutenant Colonel George and Lieutenant Colonel Rowe arrived at General Irzyk's headquarters, they were briefed on the situation and instructed to get their people ready. As this meeting was in progress, members of General Irzyk's staff were sending the alert messages to all units under his command.³

The 716th Military Police Battalion, received General Irzyk's message at approximately 1300 hours on the same day. Returning from Irzyk's

headquarters, Lieutenant Colonel Rowe immediately called an emergency meeting of his staff and 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. Whenever an alert 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 implemented. At 1350 hours, the Provost Marshal's office notified S-3, 716th Military Police Battalion, of changes in the duty commitments. Under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel George, all walking patrols were to become motorized from 1800-0800 and Car 41 was to have an additional man to replace the Vietnamese military police 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 post manned from 1800-0800.

At 1415 hours, the 716th Military Police Battalion, S-1, instructed the battalion communications section to insure that two radio repair vehicles were on the road at all times, that all personnel who manned these vehicles were armed, and that all personnel wore their 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, all communications personnel were to continuously monitor the WACO net control station.⁴

Captain Robert J. O'Brien, the officer in charge of the Marine Security Guard Detachment, met with Mr. Leo Campsey, the State Department Regional Security Officer, at 1600 hours and was briefed on the possibility of a Viet Cong attack in the Saigon area. In response to this briefing, Captain O'Brien

directed a second guard be posted at all one man posts and that a roof top watch be initiated on the new American embassy. Obtaining a radio equipped sedan from the embassy motor pool, Captain O'Brien made sure that the sedan had the capability of transmitting on Dragon net, the Marine Security Guard net. At approximately 2330 hours, Captain O'Brien and Sergeant Richard O. Frattarelli made an inspection tour of the guard posts, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker's quarters, and Ambassador Robert W. Komer's quarters.⁵

On Wednesday, 31 January 1968, at 0010 hours, Sergeant Raymond P. Schuepfer and Lance Corporal James P. Wilson assumed their duties at guard post #12, Norodom compound, next to the American embassy. Sergeant Schuepfer was designated as the roving patrol with the responsibility of checking the area on an hourly basis.⁶ After making another tour of all the guard posts, and returning to the marine house, Captain O'Brien told Sergeant Frattarelli to go to his room for some sleep and he would get him up at about 0300 for another tour. Then, Captain O'Brien went into the movie room and lay down on the sofa.⁷

At 0200 hours, Sergeant Ronald W. Harper, who assumed duties at guard post #1 in the chancery building along with Corporal Zahuranic, decided to go to the roof and relieve Sergeant Rudy A. Soto for a short break. While on the roof, Sergeant Harper toured the area, making observations of the compound in and around the embassy where everything appeared quiet. Completing his break around 0215 hours, Sergeant Soto came back to the roof of the chancery where he relieved Sergeant Harper who returned to his post in the lobby.⁸ At approximately 0235, Sergeant Schuepfer departed from post #12 to make his routine rounds of the embassy compound.⁹ Deciding to check on post #12 at

0238 to see if Sergeant Schuepfer or Lance Corporal Wilson needed coffee, Sergerant Harper departed the chancery building and proceeded toward the gate between the embassy compound and the office of the special assistant. Arriving at the gate, Harper found that he was unable to enter Norodom compound as the gate had been secured from the Norodom side. Failing to enter through this gate, Sergeant Harper 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 post #12. Approaching post #12 at approximately 0243, Harper met Sergeant Schuepfer, who was returning from his patrol of the compound. Entering the guard shack with Schuepfer, Sergeant Harper began to pour a cup of coffee. After pouring the coffee, he glanced toward the office building and observed a Vietnamese standing close by. As Harper turned to ask Schuepfer if he was a guard, the Viet Cong began an assault with automatic weapons fire. Hearing several deafening explosions, Sergeant Harper immediately dropped his cup and rushed from the guard shack at a dead run, retracing his steps of a few minutes earlier. While running, he noticed that the Vietnamese had disappeared. Rounding the corner of the office building near the rear parking area, Harper noticed an embassy driver running toward the generator building. At the same time, he observed another driver, in an embassy sedan near the rear entrance of the chancery, stretching from the front seat into the back in an attempt to get an object. Unaware of the valiant stand being made by two military policemen, Specialists Fourth Class Charles L. Daniel and Private First Class William E. Sebast, Sergeant Harper glanced toward the military police post at the vehicle gate but did not see

either of these men. Rushing toward the chancery, he found that the service entrance, as well as the side stairwell door, was locked. Harper then ran to the parking lot entrance and found that it was still open. Entering the chancery, he ran to the 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. As Sergeant Harper completed locking the main doors, he turned toward the armory which was located in the next room, at which time a B-40 rocket exploded against the six inch teakwood main doors. As a result of this explosion, he received a small shrapnel wound to 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, was much more seriously wounded. Being knocked to the floor by the blast, Zahuranic received a serious shrapnel wound to the head, which caused severe bleeding from the head and ear, and also a broken leg. After running to the armory, grabbing his Beretta sub-machine gun, and then loading it, Sergeant Harper went to the restroom where he took a handful of paper towels and returned to Corporal Zahuranic who had crawled to the armory. Instructing Zahuranic to apply these towels to his head wound, Sergeant Harper again braved the incoming fire to get a first aid kit at post #1. On his return, he found Corporal Zahuranic was unconscious. As Harper applied first aid to the corporal's wounds, a second B-40 rocket was fired into the chancery lobby striking the window at post #1 and exploding. Neither Harper or Zahuranic, protected by the armory wall, were injured by this blast. After rendering first aid to Zahuranic, Sergeant Harper entered the room adjacent to the lobby, contacted Mr. Wendt by telephone, briefed him

on what had happened, and requested help in evacuating the corporal to Wendt's location on the fourth floor of the chancery. Private First Class Charles Fisher (US Army) and Mr. Wendt arrived at the lobby within a few minutes and helped move Corporal Zahuranic to the elevator. After giving him a shotgun, a .38 cal. pistol, and a box of shotgun shells, Harper instructed Fisher to deliver Corporal Zahuranic to Mr. Wendt's location and then take the shotgun shells to Sergeant Soto on the roof.¹⁰

As Sergeant Harper was entering post #12, Sergeant Soto, who was on the roof, heard an explosion coming from the direction of the presidential palace. He immediately moved to the edge of the roof to investigate the source of this explosion and to observe several Vietnamese who were coming from the lot across the street in front of the embassy. A few seconds later, a hole was blasted through the wall on the corner of Mac Dinh Chi and Thong Nhut. At this time, Sergeant Soto observed the two military policemen, Specialists Fourth Class Daniel and Private First Class Sebast, begin their lonely defense of the compound. They began delivering accurate fire into the direction of the Viet Cong, who were entering through the breach in the wall. Exposed to deadly fire, they stood their ground killing two of the attacking Viet Cong before being killed by sappers approaching from behind. This valiant stand was the main reason that Sergeant Harper was able to get into the front entrance and secure the main doors to the chancery. Without their sacrifice, this building would have undoubtedly been entered. Sergeant Soto, as he was witnessing this gallant stand, attempted to give them supporting fire but his shotgun jammed twice while chambering a round. Failing to load his shotgun, he then engaged the sappers with his .38 cal. pistol even though the range was extreme. At this time, two sappers, hiding behind one of the round planters

in the front of the main entrance, fired a B-40 rocket at the front door. Powerless to stop this action, due to a lack of ammunition, Sergeant Soto then transmitted over Dragon net that post #1 had been hit at least twice by rockets.¹¹ As this action was taking place Lance Corporal Wilson was contacting marine house by telephone in order to request more men and ammo.¹²

As the attack was beginning at the embassy, Corporal Dennis L. Ryan, who was on duty at the marine house as the duty noncommissioned officer, heard several explosions coming from the direction of the embassy. Ryan rushed immediately to the movie room to awaken Captain O'Brien and briefed him on what he had heard. Upon completing this briefing, he went through the house insuring that all the personnel were awake. Then he proceeded to the front gate of marine house where he received the incoming telephone call from Lance Corporal Wilson at post #12.¹³

Upon being awakened and briefed by Corporal Ryan, Captain O'Brien could hear additional explosions and automatic weapons fire coming from the embassy. After Captain O'Brien contacted Sergeant Fratarelli, they raced for the sedan where they encountered three marines loading into an International Scout. This group consisted of Sergeant Patullo, Corporal Timothy P. Inemer, and Sergeant Raymond E. Reed. After ordering these men to follow him, Captain O'Brien departed for the embassy. As they arrived at the Vietnamese police checkpoint, which was on the corner of Mac Dinh Chi and Hung Trap Tu, the Vietnamese police were yelling, "VC," and pointing at the embassy. Captain O'Brien then had his team dismount and move toward the vehicle gate on foot.¹⁴

Being awakened by the first explosions at the embassy, Staff Sergeant Leroy J. Banks quickly dressed and rushed to the front gate of marine house. Upon arriving, Banks assumed command of the assembled reaction force which

consisted of Corporal Richard L. Huss, Sergeant H. Dean Spersrud, Sergeant James W. Jimerson, Corporal Dennis L. Ryan, Lance Corporal Warren D. Caudle, Sergeant Joseph J. Haas, and Corporal James C. Marshall. He departed with this reaction force within minutes of Captain O'Brien and proceeded to the front side of the embassy. Approximately three hundred meters from the compound, Banks came upon a military police checkpoint which an on duty traffic patrol had established a few minutes earlier. After informing the Military Police that they were a Marine Reaction Force which was moving toward the embassy in order to reinforce the Marine Guard Force, Banks split his group 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.¹⁵

At approximately 0300, General Westmoreland was awakened at his quarters and briefed by telephone from the Military Assistance Command Operations Center.¹⁶ About the same time, Lieutenant Colonel George was awakened at his quarters by telephone from the military police desk. After briefing him on the communications received over the radio net, the desk sergeant told Lieutenant Colonel George that there were unconfirmed reports relating an apparent attack on the embassy. Lieutenant Colonel George directed the desk sergeant to dispatch a first precinct patrol to the embassy but to insure that they understood the need to dismount about a block away and check out the situation on foot. Sergeant Jonnie B. Thomas and Specialist Fourth Class Owen E. Mebust were dispatched to the embassy and given Lieutenant Colonel George's instructions. Unfortunately, it is believed that they misunderstood the location of the embassy due to the site where they dismounted. After directing that the 716th Military Police Battalion be tasked to respond by

sending a reaction force to the embassy, Lieutenant Colonel George immediately dressed and proceeded to the military police desk.¹⁷

When Sergeant Leslie R. Trent, the charge of quarters, 527th Military Police Company, entered Sergeant Arthur Rivera's room at the International Hotel, he told him to get his reaction force ready as the American Embassy was under attack. Sergeant Rivers immediately ran to the room in which his eleven man reaction force was sleeping and in a matter of minutes the team was formed as they were sleeping in their fatigues.¹⁸ Learning of the possible attack at the American embassy, Lieutenant Frank Ribich immediately dressed and went to the second floor where he was briefed by Lieutenant Colonel Rowe on the explosions and received orders to take charge of the 527th Reaction Force which was being prepared for dispatch.¹⁹

While preparing his team, Sergeant Rivera was instructed to stand by until the intelligence officer briefed him. After being advised on the limited amount of information available, Sergeant Rivera moved his reaction force to the alert vehicle.²⁰

At this time, Staff Sergeant Bank's reaction force, upon nearing Norodom compound gate, came under heavy automatic weapons fire. After Banks moved his men to the compound, Corporal Huss tried the gate and found that it was locked. While yelling for Sergeant Schuepfer to unlock the side gate, Banks was informed that there were sappers inside the main embassy compound. He immediately made the decision to have half of his men, who were under the cover of the trees, remain in position and with his fire team moved up the wall to the main gate. His plan was to move his team into position just outside the main gate and then fire through the wrought iron into the compound. As Sergeant Banks, Sergeant Speraudo, Sergeant Jimerson, Jr., and

Corporal Huss moved along the wall toward the compound, a hand grenade was thrown over the wall hitting Jimerson on the leg. Reacting quickly, he kicked the grenade into the street while yelling, "Hit the deck!" Although the grenade exploded, none of the team was injured but came under heavy sniper fire and was forced to withdraw to the vicinity of Norodom gate. As the team arrived back at Norodom Compound, another grenade was thrown over the wall. Seeing the grenade hit the sidewalk, Corporal Ryan yelled, "grenade," and the entire reaction force again hit the deck. Due to Ryan's warning, it caused no injuries. After Lance Corporal Caudle and Corporal Huss opened the gate, which Sergeant Schuepfer had unlocked, Staff Sergeant Banks, with the members of his reaction force, entered the compound where he deployed his men.²¹ While Banks was dispersing his team on the front side of the embassy, Captain O'Brien's team proceeded toward the side gate on foot utilizing the cover and concealment offered by the trees on both sides of the street. As the sappers in the front compound fired rockets at several of the upper floors of the embassy, Captain O'Brien neared the vehicle gate and began calling to the military policemen but did not receive any response as Specialist Fourth Class Daniel and Private First Class Sebast had been killed minutes earlier. Upon reaching the gate, O'Brien observed approximately six Viet Cong near the flower pots and pillars which were located close to the chancery building. Approaching the sappers who had their backs toward the team, Captain O'Brien yelled for Sergeant Reed to begin firing with the team's only Beretta submachine gun. At the same time, Captain O'Brien, Sergeant Frattarelli and Sergeant Patulio began firing their .38 caliber pistols. Sergeant Reed's burst of automatic weapons fire killed one Viet Cong and possibly wounded another. The sappers quickly recovered and began returning a large volume of

automatic weapons fire. An intense fire fight ensued for the next four to five minutes, forcing Captain O'Brien to withdraw his team back across the street where Corporal Inemer was providing cover fire.²²

Back at the International Hotel, Lieutenant Ribich joined Sergeant Rivera at the vehicles around 0317. After Sergeant Rivera briefed Lieutenant Ribich on the information received by the intelligence officer, a decision was made to take the vehicles as far as John F. Kennedy Circle, then dismount, and walk the rest of the way to the embassy.²³

At approximately 0320, David Carpenter, political officer, arrived at Mr. Calhoun's residence where he contacted the Military Assistance Command Operations Center, briefed them on the attack, and requested a medical evacuation helicopter for Corporal Zahuranic. He also informed them that the evacuation would have to be carried out from the helipad on the roof of the embassy.²⁴

Meanwhile Lieutenant Ribich and Sergeant Rivera had loaded their reaction force on the vehicles at the International Hotel. The team vehicles consisted of a 3/4 ton truck and a jeep. Each member of the reaction force was armed with a .45 caliber pistol coupled with three magazines of .45 ammunition and a M-16 rifle with 100 rounds of ammunition. Although events proved that this was not the case, the alert 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.²⁵

After Corporal Huss and Sergeant Schuepfer determined that no one was covering the rear entrance to Norodom compound, they immediately 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 an intruder, who was walking

behind a blue sedan. Lacking information on who was stationed near the vehicles, he did not immediately 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 a .38 caliber revolver which was the only available weapon. Although he hit the Viet Cong in his lower body, knocking him down, the wounded man managed to crawl behind another vehicle. Having expended his ammunition, Corporal Huss was not able to engage him further without reloading. ²⁶ While these events were unfolding in the parking area, Corporal Ryan, having taken up a position near Norodom compound gate, observed the Military Police Patrol, consisting of Sergeant Thomas and Specialist Fourth Class Mebust, driving near the main gate. While exiting the vehicle on the passenger side and turning as if to walk to the rear, Sergeant Thomas was shot in the back by a sniper. After stumbling toward the vehicle, he collapsed. Although Corporal Ryan yelled for the driver to take cover and get an ambulance, Specialist Fourth Class Mebust apparently did not hear him or realize that Sergeant Thomas was dead as he ran around the vehicle to offer assistance. Reaching Sergeant Thomas, he grabbed the radio microphone in an apparent attempt to transmit but was killed by a burst of automatic weapon fire. Seeing Mebust fall on Thomas's body, Corporal Ryan was unable to assist since his only weapon was a .38 revolver, and sniper fire had driven him to take cover. ²⁷

Arriving at John F. Kennedy Circle at 0325, Lieutenant Ribich and Sergeant Rivera dismounted the reaction force from the vehicle and divided the group into two teams. While moving toward the embassy, they, realizing that military police did not receive combat training in Advanced Individual Training, briefed their individual force on working as a fire team. Even

though Lieutenant Ribich saw fifteen Vietnamese dressed in black pajamas as he moved toward the embassy, he was unaware of the situation at the embassy and did not open fire. Observing a large volume of red tracers hitting the street and buildings within a block of the embassy, he instructed one of his military policeman to cross the street, go over a 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 Viet Cong had been in the compound. After signaling Lieutenant Ribich to begin this vital crossing, he proceeded to provide cover for the move. Within four hundred feet of Norodom compound, the reaction force came under intense automatic weapons fire. Seeing Thomas's jeep as he neared the compound, Lieutenant Ribich was unaware that both Thomas and Mebust had been killed while trying to get a warning to the military police desk. Around 0337 hours, Lieutenant Ribich, after assessing the current situation and seeing that the incoming fire was from the direction of the apartment building opposite the embassy compound, decided to utilize Sergeant Rivera's fire team to secure his flank. Thus he ordered Rivera's team to 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.²⁸ Realizing the seriousness of the cross fire which the force was receiving and the need to ensure his base position, 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 without his or Lieutenant Ribich's permission. Deploying his four remaining military policemen, Sergeant Rivera then moved

toward his objective. Unaware that the sniper at this location had already abandoned his position, Rivera realized that with his meager force he would have to secure the building from the top down and ordered his men to make a rush for the roof. In a matter of minutes, they reached that location. Arriving on the roof, Sergeant Rivera observed four individuals with weapons and ordered them to drop their firearms. After the individuals quickly complied, 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. After clearing the building floor by floor and giving the same instructions to all civilians, Rivera's 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, leaving Lieutenant Ribich to move his men into Norodom compound.²⁹ Seeking out Staff Sergeant Banks, the ranking marine guard, Lieutenant Ribich quickly briefed him on the deployment of Sergeant Rivera. These two then made a critical decision which was to have a profound impact on the entire battle. Realizing that it was imperative that the marine chain of command remain intact, Lieutenant Ribich 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 Banks and Ribich working very closely together.³⁰

After Lieutenant Ribich contacted Staff Sergeant Banks and dispersed his team into defensive position, they entered the guard shack where Lieutenant Ribich phoned Gunnery Sergeant Allen Morrison to brief him on the current deployment of his troops and the command structure implemented. 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. Gunnery Sergeant Morrison confirmed his agreement with the command structure: the inter-service attack force, comprised of Military Policemen and Marine Security Guards, which would prove to be a determining factor in the upcoming assault on the embassy compound. The smooth quick response to the changing situation by both military policemen and marines working in coordination was nothing short of remarkable.³¹ Following this conversation, Lieutenant Ribich contacted Sergeant Harper to determine if any sappers had entered the building and the current enemy situation within the compound. Confirming that no Viet Cong had entered the building, Sergeant Harper stated that he could hear them outside and could turn on the lights. Lieutenant Ribich decided against this course of action, fearing his positions would be spotlighted for the Viet Cong snipers and rocket teams.³²

While these events were taking place, Dustoff 75, commanded by Captain Thomas W. Hill, was returning to Long Binh for fuel. Although airborne at the beginning of the TET offensive, his helicopter was the only Dustoff aircraft available at this time. Captain Hill was contacted by Dustoff control in Long Binh and given the urgent medical evacuation request from the Military Assistance Command Operations Center for one seriously wounded at the American embassy in Saigon. After inquiring as to the availability of another

aircraft, he was informed that the airfield had been under rocket attack and it was unknown if any aircraft were still operational as time would be needed for the checking crews to make that determination. Captain Hill informed them that he would have to refuel prior to attempting this mission.³³ Eight minutes later, as Dustoff 75 lifted off enroute to the embassy, Mr. Carpenter, the Minister Counselor for Political Affairs, who had been stationed approximately one mile from the chancery in a temporary communications center, made contact with Mr. John Thompson, the duty officer at the operations center of the State Department, Washington, D. C., and briefed him on the situation at the embassy.³⁴

Back at the marine house, Gunney Sergeant Morrison was informed by the communication center that General Westmoreland's headquarters had indicated that Dustoff was on its way and that Colonel George was forming a Military Police Reaction Force which would be deposited on the embassy roof by helicopter. Morrison then contacted Sergeant Soto to inform him of the helicopter missions. Since, heavy enemy fire prevented the chopper from picking up the Military Police Platoon at Tan Son Nnut, the 101st Airborne Division was tasked with this mission.³⁵

Corporal Huss and Lance Corporal Caudle were still in the area near the rear parking lot of Norodom compound. Making the decision to run for a door to the motor pool, located in the generator building, Caudle was fired upon by a couple of automatic weapons. Upon reaching the generator building, Lance Corporal Caudle 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 the guards inside the chancery, Caudle yelled for Huss to radio the guards to stop firing. Recognizing that the fire

was coming from several sappers, Corporal Huss, being armed with only a .38 revolver, departed to get Staff Sergeant Banks and more firepower. After Huss's departure at about 0355, 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, Lance Corporal Caudle stepped outside the doorway to cover them. At that time a sapper, hiding behind a tree in the parking lot, opened fire on Caudle causing him to jump back inside the building and again hit the floor. Once again intense fire, which included a rocket, exploded against the wall, but Lance Corporal Caudle was not injured. After arriving at the guard shack, Corporal Huss informed Lieutenant Ribich and Staff Sergeant Banks of the situation in the parking lot. Banks immediately departed with Sergeant Jimerson, Sergeant Spersrud, Corporal Marshall, and two military policemen for this area. Two minutes after Staff Sergeant Banks departed, around 0400, a Military Police Patrol, which had been on duty and responded to the embassy, reported to Lieutenant Ribich. 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 in the parking lot. Instructing them to follow him, they departed at a dead run around the office of the special assistant. After placing the machine gun in the doorway of the generator building, they began firing on the vehicles in the parking lot. Lieutenant Ribich then contacted Staff Sergeant Banks to brief him on the action and returned to the command post leaving Banks in charge of the situation.³⁶ Sergeant Jimerson then began jumping outside the doorway spotting targets for the M-60 machine gun. While Staff Sergeant Banks was evaluating the situation, Lance Corporal Caudle took advantage of a break in firing to rush from the generator building. After

Caudle joined the group, 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 a base of fire. As Jimerson stepped through the doorway, he spotted two sappers running across the parking lot and fired all twenty rounds causing both Viet Cong to fall. Attempting to get back into the doorway, 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 into the building under the covering fire of the M-60 machine gun.³⁷ Due to Sergeant Jimerson's wounds and the inability to break through the opposing force, Staff Sergeant Banks decided to move back to the front of Norodom compound. As another rocket exploded, Banks departed with part of his team, leaving two military policemen with the M-60 and two team members to cover the area, thereby protecting these positions. Arriving at the command post, he briefed Lieutenant Ribich and then contacted Gunnery Sergeant Morrison to brief him and to request an ambulance be sent about a block from the compound for Sergeant Jimerson's evacuation.³⁸ While two military policemen were administering first aid to him, Sergeant Jimerson yelled that a rocket was coming in and immediately the two military policemen jumped on him to cover his body. The rocket exploded spraying the area with shrapnel and wounding one of the military policemen in the arm. Although Sergeant Jimerson received another wound in his left arm, the protection provided by the military policemen's flack jackets prevented him from being wounded more seriously. Five minutes later, Jimerson was evacuated down the street to an ambulance that transported him to the 17th Field Hospital.³⁹ At

the vehicle gate, Captain O'Brien decided to send Sergeant Frattarelli back to the sedan in order to contact Gunnery Sergeant Morrison and request more men and ammunition. Arriving at the sedan, Sergeant Fratterelli contacted Morrison and was briefed on the activities along the front side of the embassy.⁴⁰ While this conversation was taking place, Specialist Fourth Class Harold Cockran and Specialist Fourth Class Delmer P. Miles, an on duty patrol, arrived at Captian O'Brien's location. As Cockran was moving up the street to Captain O'Brien's position, Mr. Champsey and Mr. Robert Furey, State Department Security Advisor, arrived and were taken to Captain O'Brien. It was then decided to attempt to shoot the lock off the vehicle gate. While Mr. Furey and Captain O'Brien were attempting to disengage the lock, 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 realizing that they were Americans. The intense sniper fire then forced Mr. Furey and Captain O'Brien to withdraw to Cockran's position where they learned that another patrol of military policemen had just arrived. Specialist Fourth Class Delmer P. Miles and one of the military policeman from the other patrol then went on the roof of a building across the street and began firing into the compound while Specialist Fourth Class Cockran remained 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 the 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.⁴¹

During this time, Corporal Marshall and Corporal Ryan, stationed at Norodom compound, climbed on top of the office of the special assistant to obtain a good field of fire into the embassy compound. While following

Marshall to the roof, Corporal Ryan heard him fire a .45 pistol that he had obtained from a military policeman. Corporal Marshall then stated that the M-60, which was stationed at the rear of Norodom compound, was driving the sappers into the front compound. Ryan, armed with a Beretta and 200 rounds of ammunition, saw three sappers in front of their position and opened fire. Realizing that their advance had been blocked by these two men, the Viet Cong sappers ran toward the main entrance of the chancery. Corporal Ryan opened fire again and all three went down. Observing a sapper crawling from behind a planter, Corporal Marshall fired several rounds with his .45 and killed him. A few seconds after this Viet Cong was hit, a grenade went off under him blowing his feet into the air. Although two more sappers were spotted, before they could fire on them, Corporal Ryan was wounded in the head, left arm, and left leg by a rocket that hit the office of the special assistant. Wounded in the face by shrapnel, Corporal Marshall assisted Corporal Ryan down from the building to several military policemen on the ground. After taking Ryan's Beretta and one hundred rounds, Corporal Marshall returned to his position on the roof.⁴² While Corporal Ryan and Corporal Marshall were engaging the Viet Cong in the embassy compound, Lieutenant Ribich dispatched a military policeman to radio the military police desk requesting more ammunition and another reaction force.⁴³ Having been evacuated from the top of the building, Corporal Ryan was moved close to the front wall and requested that the military policemen put a field dressing over his wound. Fearing that a piece of shrapnel, which was protruding from the head, might kill him if moved, Lieutenant Ribich instructed them to leave the wound alone. A few minutes later, Ryan was evacuated to the 17th Field Hospital, and Corporal Wilson went to the roof to assist Corporal Marshall. For the next six to eight minutes,

these men fired at movement around the compound. Lieutenant Ribich then decided to send two military policemen to assist them. At this time another rocket hit the French roof of the building but failed to explode.⁴⁴

About this time, Staff Sergeant Banks, using a phone in the guard shack, contacted the chancery and talked to Sergeant Harper who informed him of the activity occurring in the front compound. Banks then explained the decision to wait until daybreak to assault the compound and assured Harper that they would get to him as soon as possible.⁴⁵ Staff Sergeant Banks then returned to the rear of Norodom compound and noted that the doorway and opening in the wall were still under heavy fire. He also observed that the Viet Cong had the entire wall and entrance covered from a well entrenched firing position. Hearing the fire coming from Captain O'Brien's team, Staff Sergeant Banks headed for the command post where he informed Lieutenant Ribich of the situation, and they contacted Gunnery Sergeant Morrison to relay the information.⁴⁶

As events were unfolding at Norodom compound, 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 in the embassy compound, that there were Viet Cong on the lower floor, and that he was unarmed. Passing this information on to Lieutenant Ribich and Staff Sergeant Banks, Gunnery Sergeant Morrison instructed them to refrain from firing into the second floor. The word was then passed to the men in the compound and to the M-60 crew. Having learned that a plane was enroute to spray tear gas on the compound, Gunnery Sergeant Morrison advised the Military Assistance Command Operations Center to have the

mission cancelled because the marines did not have protective masks. The mission was then scrubbed.⁴⁷

About 0418, the military police desk received the request from Lieutenant Ribich for ammunition. Contacting Sergeant Rob Kuldass, who was his traffic chief, Lieutenant Colonel George issued the instructions for Sergeant Kuldass to go to the ammunition bunker, use whatever means necessary to get ammunition, and then deliver it to the American embassy. Taking Captain David L. Davenport and one Korean military policeman with him, Sergeant Kuldass managed to get the ammunition from the bunker, loaded it into a van, and departed for the American embassy.⁴⁸

While Sergeant Kuldass was at the ammunition bunker, Staff Sergeant Banks again contacted Sergeant Harper, directing him to make sure no sappers had entered the chancery. Checking the stairwell on his side of the building, Sergeant Harper crawled out of the armory 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 then took the guard and returned to the armory, placing the Vietnamese guard in the corner for the night. Being contacted by Mr. Wendt, Sergeant Harper learned that Private First Class Fisher had been unable to get on the roof because Sergeant Soto, who was out of ammunition, locked the door apparently thinking the Viet Cong sappers were trying to enter. After unsuccessfully attempting to contact Sergeant Soto, Harper called Mr. James A. Griffin, who was on duty in the communications section, requesting that he come down the elevator to get a .38 with extra ammunition and a master key.

By this time, the Military Assistance Command Operations Center had informed Mr. Wendt that the Dustoff helicopter was enroute. Mr. Wendt and Mr. Griffin then moved Corporal Zahuranic to the roof to await evacuation.⁴⁹

At about 0425, Gunnery Sergeant Morrison contacted Sergeant Ariola asking him to inform General Westmoreland's aide that their best course of action would be to provide weapons and ammunition to marine house, leaving Morrison with the responsibility of getting it to the embassy. Due to the lack of automatic weapons and ammunition at marine house, Morrison sent Sergeant Richard L. Johnson and Sergeant Joseph S. Wolff to Ambassador Komer's house to pick up a Beretta submachine gun. Since this location was only two blocks from marine house, they were able to return in ten minutes without incident.⁵⁰

While these events were transpiring at marine house, Mr. Calhoun called General Westmoreland and asked what reaction force and medevac arrangements had been put into effect. General Westmoreland indicated that the medevac was on its way and that a reaction force was being formed.⁵¹

Arriving about three blocks from the American embassy, Sergeant Kuldass 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 Kuldass arrived at the military police checkpoint just about the time Lieutenant Ribich was leaving to inquire about the situation at Rivera's location.⁵² At the gate to Norodom compound, Lieutenant Ribich observed a black vehicle approaching from the front of the embassy. Ribich then yelled in Vietnamese for them to stop. Ignoring his warning, the vehicle traveled past him to the military police checkpoint where it was stopped by Sergeant Rivera. As Rivera walked toward the vehicle, he pointed his M-16 at the driver's head 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 car, swirled around, and headed down the street toward Lieutenant Ribich. Sergeant Rivera and members of his fire team, including an M-60 machine gun which had arrived approximately fifteen minutes earlier, began firing 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 traveled through the vehicle and struck the wall by 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.⁵³

While the military police were involved with the vehicle in front of the embassy, Captain Hill, in Dustoff 75, had departed Long Binh and contacted Dustoff control requesting a frequency on which he could contact the personnel at the embassy. After finding that it was impossible for him to transmit or receive on any of the frequencies aboard the aircraft, Captain Hill briefed the crew on procedures to be followed upon arrival at the embassy and instructed them to observe closely on approach in hopes of determining where the firing was concentrated.⁵⁴

At the vehicle gate, Sergeant Frattarelli, after receiving instructions from Captain O'Brien to return to the sedan and radio for additional ammunition, 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 his position where he briefed Captain O'Brien on what had happened.⁵⁵

Captain James T. Chester, commander of B Company, 716th Military Police Battalion, departed at 0430 with a fifty man reaction force. Arriving within one block of the American embassy. Captain Chester, along with Lieutenant Ribich, Sergeant First Class Williams, and two military policemen, proceeded to Norodom compound.⁵⁶ As they entered Norodom compound, Dustoff 75 was approaching the embassy from the east. While Dustoff 75 was attempting to land on top of the embassy, Ribich, along with the Military Police Reaction Force and Marine Security Guards, provided maximum suppressive fire. By the third attempt, the military police and marines faced a shortage of ammunition which was alleviated by the arrival of Sergeant Kuldas. This additional ammunition allowed the military policemen to continue active harassment fire on the Viet Cong located inside the compound thereby providing the necessary support for the Dustoff crew. Having sustained hits in the cabin section and tail boom, Captain Hill, fearing that the fuel cells had been hit, decided to return to Tan Son Nhut airbase to refuel and check the aircraft for damage. Enroute to Tan Son Nhut airbase, Captain Hill contacted Dustoff control in order to request that a replacement helicopter take over his mission at the American embassy. After being informed that it would be at least one to one and a half hours before any of the Dustoff ships could be launched, Captain Hill reported that after checking his aircraft for battle damage, he would return for another attempt. Upon landing at Tan Son Nhut near the control tower, as Hotel 3 (heliport) was under attack by heavy automatic weapons fire, Specialist Fifth Class Thomas L. Johnson exited the aircraft and began checking for damage. Determining that the helicopter had received forty-one

hits, which were mostly in the tail boom section, Johnson reported the damage to Captain Hill but stated that the helicopter could make another attempt.⁵⁷ At this time, the airport came under rocket attack. Contacting the Military Assistance Command Operations Center, Mr. Carpenter learned that the medevac helicopter had been delayed due to the attack on Tan Son Nhut but that the helicopter was now being dispatched.⁵⁸

Even though the forces in Norodom compound were deployed sufficiently to keep the Viet Cong pinned down in the embassy compound, Captain Chester and Lieutenant Ribich, seeking to ensure that all routes of escape were closed, decided around 0500 to position Chester's reaction force along the street in front of the embassy.⁵⁹ Twenty-five minutes later, Ambassador Bunker called Mr. Calhoun to report that the medevac had not been able to land on the first attempt and would try again. By 0545, Dustoff 75 was again enroute to make the medical evacuation on top of the embassy.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, Corporal Wilson, Corporal Marshall, and two military policemen, stationed on top of the office of the special assistant, spotted a Viet Cong behind a tree and fired in that direction. As the sapper began returning fire from the compound, Corporal Marshall was hit in the neck and fell to the roof. Stepping down to check Marshall, Corporal Wilson found that he was dead and yelled to the military police to get off the roof as the fire had become extremely heavy.⁶¹

As Dustoff 75 approached the embassy, Captain Hill observed fire coming from the front of the compound and decided to make a straight in approach from the rear of the embassy in order to give the Viet Cong as little warning as possible. About five hundred meters from the roof, on Dustoff's final approach, 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 Captain Hill to get on short final before the Viet Cong could see him. Just before the aircraft landed, it began receiving fire from the parking lot. Due to the extremely effective fire from the military policemen manning the M-60, the aircraft was able to land. Noticing the individuals at the side of the helipad, Specialist Fifth Class Johnson motioned for them to come over to the helicopter. Sergeant Soto pulled Corporal Zahuranic up the stairs and over to the aircraft. After Zahuranic was loaded aboard, the medic began checking him. As Sergeant Soto and an individual from Page Electronics boarded, Johnson asked if there was anyone else to be evacuated from the building. About this time, the Viet Cong began getting the range of the helipad. Using the intercom, Captain Hill instructed the crew to load up. As the aircraft was taking off, it began taking fire and hits with one round entering through the floor only inches from Zahuranic's head. As Captain Hill reached flying speed and was gaining height, the fire warning light came on along with the low RPM warning light. After being instructed to check the engine for fire, Johnson climbed onto the skids and checked, determining that there was no fire. Having this information, Captain Hill decided to go ahead and try for the 93d Evacuation Hospital at Long Binh. Noticing that the aircraft was losing fuel rapidly, Captain Hill contacted Dustoff 72, flown by 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 pick up the passengers and Corporal Zahuranic. After landing, Sergeant Soto and the Dustoff medic transferred Zahuranic to the other helicopter. Crawling under the aircraft, Specialist Fifth Class Johnson began stuffing rags into the holes in order to stop the flow of fuel from the

self-sealing tanks. Then Dustoff 72 flew Zahuranic to the hospital in Long Binh, leaving Dustoff 74 to follow approximately eight minutes later. The aircraft had sustained eighty-seven hits by enemy ground fire.⁶²

As dawn was approaching, Captain O'Brien directed Sergeant Reed to make another attempt to get to the sedan to contact Gunnery Sergeant Morrison requesting 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 resupply of nine millimeter and .38 caliber ammunition to Captain O'Brien at the vehicle gate of the embassy compound.⁶³

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. Crampsey 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. Specialist Fourth Class Delmer Miles, a military policeman, aided by Captain O'Brien, pulled Sergeant Patullo off the wall. While placing a tourniquet on Patullo's leg, Captain O'Brien directed Sergeant Fratarelli and Corporal Inemer to get him to the 17th Field Hospital. Shortly thereafter, Sergeant Bothwell, Sergeant Johnson, and Sergeant Wolff advanced to the rear of the generator building roof. As they delivered a steady volume of fire toward the sappers located behind the cars in the parking lot, Sergeant Bothwell, stationed at the side vehicle gate, killed two Viet Cong who were at the far corner of the chancery building.⁶⁴ 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

fire with 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 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's position for an additional supply. After reaching the ground, Sergeant Wolff was pinned down by sniper fire, but Sergeant Johnson and Sergeant Reed neutralized the Viet Cong fire from the rear parking lot thereby enabling Sergeant Wolff to reach Corporal Huss's position where he received a .45 caliber pistol with several magazines of ammunition.⁶⁵

At Norodom compound, Lieutenant Ribich made radio contact with WACO, the military police net control station, and was informed that Colonel George wanted them to take the embassy. Lieutenant Ribich informed WACO that he wanted to wait an additional fifteen minutes for daylight. Three minutes later, he received the order to go.⁶⁶ As Sergeant Rivera, who was beside Lieutenant Ribich, moved to get his men ready, a South Vietnamese soldier came up and stated that he wished to help. After checking his papers, Rivera gave him an M-79 grenade launcher and instructed him to follow. At 0700 hours, Lieutenant Ribich passed the instructions to advance forward. At this time Specialist Fourth Class Healey and Sergeant John Shook took a jeep to the main gate and shot the lock off, but the gate would not open. While Sergeant Kuldas and several military policemen added weight to the vehicle, the gate was forced open enough to allow entering, one at a time. For the next fifteen

minutes, the military policemen moved along the wall and across the compound engaging the Viet Cong and killing those that were in the front compound. As Healey and 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. Specialist Fourth Class Healey threw him a .45 and a CS gas grenade.⁶⁷

As the military police entered the front compound, Sergeant Rivera's force, along with the marines, entered the parking area through Norodom compound. Coming through the steel door separating Norodom compound from the parking area, Sergeant Rivera saw three Viet Cong which caused him to open fire killing all three. One of the sappers in the parking area who had been killed by Rivera was holding a machine gun which continued to fire until it was empty. Hearing movement inside the parking area shack, Sergeant Rivera entered 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 where he saw a sapper by the mission coordinator's house and opened fire. As another Viet Cong ran into the basement, the South Vietnamese soldier, standing in the open fire, began shooting M-79 grenades into the basement without regarding his own safety. When Sergeant Rivera, the marines, and military policemen moved along the embassy wall, they saw a sapper who appeared to be dead. Suddenly, this Viet Cong moved and Sergeant Rivera emptied a magazine into him.⁶⁸ As this action was taking place, Sergeant Kuldass and Specialist Fourth Class Healey entered the bottom floor of the building. Hearing noises in the kitchen and believing it was more Viet Cong, Sergeant Kuldass threw a hand grenade into the area. After the explosion, Healey could still hear voices and threw another grenade.

Following the second explosion, Kuldass heard shots from upstairs where Colonel Jacobson had just killed another sapper. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Ribich and Corporal Chester had entered the compound and were coordinating the clearing of the front when a tear gas grenade went off in the mission coordinator's house. Overcome by the gas, Specialist Fourth Class Healey staggered out of the door where he was helped to the side of the embassy by Lieutenant Ribich. By this time, Sergeant Kuldass had insured that the mission coordinator's house was cleared of sappers and began a sweep of the back parking area in order to insure that all sappers were dead.⁶⁹

As General Westmoreland arrived at the embassy by car, two helicopters, carrying a platoon of 101st Airborne Troops, set down on the roof. Immediately, General Westmoreland went to the top floor of the embassy to meet with the commander of the platoon. After completing this meeting, the General headed for the communications room where he called Phillip Habib, the Assistant Secretary of State, in Washington.⁷⁰

After covering the bodies of Specialist Fourth Class Daniel and Private First Class Sabast with a poncho, Sergeant Rivera proceeded to check on his men. A reporter went over to the bodies, removed the poncho, and started taking pictures. When Rivera saw this action, he ran over to the reporter and grabbed the camera. After stating that he did not want the families of these men to see them like this, Sergeant Rivera destroyed the camera.⁷¹ In the back parking lot, Sergeant Kuldass, Corporal Moyer, and Specialist Fourth Class Singer noticed blood stains on the wall beside the embassy. Footprints on the wall made it evident that a sapper had tried to scale the structure. While Kuldass and Singer proceeded around the building and entered Norodom compound, Moyer was left in front of the office building in case they flushed out the

wounded Viet Cong. As Sergeant Kuldas and Specialist Fourth Class 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 animal. Retriving the AK-47, Sergeant Kuldas 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. As Sergeant Kuldas opened fire on 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 Kuldas 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. Returning to the office building, Sergeant Kuldas made a thorough search.⁷²

By this time, Sergeant Rivera had moved to the front of the building and a reporter came up to 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, Rivera became angry and began to cry. As Lieutenant Ribich was calming him, Captain Sampson, who was General Westmoreland's aide, came over and stated, "I'm sorry you had to hear that, you men did a great job." Lieutenant Ribich then went over to Sergeant Rivera and stated that it was over so they could get their people and go home.⁷³

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 to other firefights. At the embassy, nineteen Viet Cong sappers were known dead, one

Viet Cong was captured along with the loss of four military policemen and one marine security guard.⁷⁴

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 represented 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 which were at fifty percent strength thereby limiting their effectiveness. The 716th Military Police Battalion, augmented by platoons from the 92nd Military Police Battalion and the Saigon support troop personnel, was tasked with the defense of Saigon during the first critical hours.⁷⁵ As noted by General Alvin F. Irzyk during his staff conference of 8 February 1968, the Military Police played a vital role in the defense of this city:

. . .Our front line troops were the MP's. 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 requests 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. . .⁷⁶

As a direct result of this action, on 4 February 1969, one year after the opening of the battle, President Richard M. Nixon, as one of his first acts, signed the order awarding the 716th Military Police Battalion and attached units, which included the 527th Military Police Company, Company C, 52nd Infantry, and the 90th 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.⁷⁷

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 during World War I, down to the beachheads and Remagan Bridge during 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.

Footnotes

¹Colonel Hoang Ngoc Lung, "The General Offensive of 1968-69," Monograph, U. S. Army Center of Military History, Washington, D. C., p. 24.

²General 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.

³Brigadier 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.

⁴U. S. Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, "Daily Staff Journal, 30 January 1968," pp. 1-2.

⁵Marine 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.

⁶Ibid., statement by Sgt. Raymond P. Schuepfer.

⁷Ibid., statement by LTC Robert J. O'Brien

⁸Ibid., statement by Sgt. Ronald W. Harper and Sgt. Rudy A. Soto, Jr.

⁹Ibid., statement by Sgt. Raymond P. Schuepfer.

¹⁰Ibid., 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.

¹¹Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Sgt. Rudy A. Soto.

¹²Ibid., statement by Lance Corporal James P. Wilson.

¹³Ibid., statement by Corporal Dennis L. Ryan.

¹⁴Ibid., statement by Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. O'Brien; statement by Sergeant Richard C. Frattarelli.

¹⁵Ibid., statement by Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks; statement by Sgt. Joseph J. Haas; statement by Sgt. James W. Jimerson, Jr.

¹⁶General William C. Westmoreland, interview by telephone from his home in Charleston, South Carolina, October 1981.

¹⁷Colonel Richard E. George, interview by telephone from his home in Mukilteo, Washington, August 1981.

¹⁸Sergeant 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.

¹⁹Major Frank Ribich, interview at the United States Army Military Police School, Fort McClellan, Al., September 1981.

²⁰Rivera, interview, Military Police School.

²¹Marine 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.

²²Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. O'Brien; statement by Sgt. Richard A. Frattarelli.

²³Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; U. S. Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, "Daily Staff Journal, 31 January 1968," p. 2.

²⁴Department of State Telegram Number 799, Saigon, Vietnam, 31 January 1968.

²⁵Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; U. S. Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, "Daily Staff Journal, 31 January 1968," p. 2.

²⁶Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Corporal Richard L. Huss.

²⁷Marine 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.

²⁸Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; Sergeant First Class Rivera, interview, September 1981.

29 Sergeant First Class Rivera, interview, September 1981.

30 Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement of Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.

31 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.

32 Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; Sgt. Ronald W. Harper, interview by telephone at his home in Willmar, Minnesota, January 1983.

33 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.

34 Department of State Telegram No. 799, 31 January 1968.

35 Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Gunnery Sergeant Allen Morrison; Department of State Telegram No. 799, 31 January 1968.

36 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.

37 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.

38 Ibid., statement by Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.

39 Ibid., statement by Sergeant James W. Jimerson, Jr.; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.

40 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.

41 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.

⁴² Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Corporal Dennis L. Ryan.

⁴³ Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.

⁴⁴ Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Corporal Dennis L. Ryan; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.

⁴⁵ Ibid., statement by Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks; statement by Sergeant Ronald W. Harper.

⁴⁶ Ibid., statement by Master Sergeant Leroy J. Banks.

⁴⁷ Ibid., statement by Gunnery Sergeant Allen Morrison; statement by Master Sergeant Leroy L. Banks; Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981.

⁴⁸ 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.

⁴⁹ Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Sergeant Ronald W. Harper.

⁵⁰ Ibid., statement by Gunnery Sergeant Allen Morrison; statement by Sergeant Richard L. Johnson; statement by Sergeant Joseph S. Wolff.

⁵¹ Department of State Telegram No. 799, 31 January 1968.

⁵² Master Sergeant Rob Kuldass, interview, October 1981.

⁵³ Major Frank Ribich, interview, September 1981; Sergeant First Class Arthur Rivera, interview, September 1981.

⁵⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Thomas W. Hill, interview, December 1981.

⁵⁵ Marine Security Guard Detachment, Occurrence Report No. 1-68, statement by Sergeant Richard G. Frattarelli.

⁵⁶ Interview with Major Frank Ribich, September 1981; U. S. Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, "Daily Staff Journal, 31 January 1968," p. 2.

⁵⁷ Lieutenant Colonel Thomas W. Hill, interview, December 1981; Department of State Telegram No. 441, 31 January 1968.

⁷⁵Lung, "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.

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

⁷⁷Department 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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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 L. 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)



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 Sklen
WAYNE L SKLEN
CW3 USA

General Orders

No. 31

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

VIETNAMESE CROSS OF GALLANTRY WITH PALMSection 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