

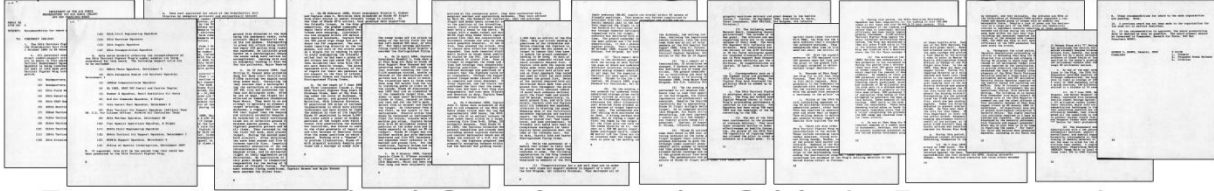
Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 283

In this issue:

Recommendation for Award of Unit Decoration

The 35th Tactical Fighter Wing is...



Recommended for Award of Unit Decoration



The Presidential Unit Citation (PUC), originally called the Distinguished Unit Citation, is awarded to units of the uniformed services of the United States, and those of allied countries, for extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy on or after 7 December 1941 (the date of the Attack on Pearl Harbor and the start of American involvement in World War II). The unit must display such gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps in accomplishing its mission under extremely difficult and hazardous conditions so as to set it apart from and above other units participating in the same campaign.

The collective degree of valor (combat heroism) against an armed enemy by the unit nominated for the PUC is the same as that which would warrant award of the individual award of the Distinguished Service Cross, Air Force Cross or Navy Cross. In some cases, one or more individuals within the unit may have also been awarded individual awards for their contribution to the actions for which their entire unit was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation.

THE RECOMMENDATION

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 7AF AIR FORCE (PACAF)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96307

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: C
SUBJECT: Recommendation for Award of Unit Decoration
TO COMUSMACV (MACJOO)

1. The 35th Tactical Fighter Wing is recommended for award of the Presidential Unit Citation for extraordinary heroism from 1 October 1968 to 28 February 1970.

a. All personnel assigned or attached to the combat or direct combat-support units of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing are to share in this award, with the exception of the 8th Tactical Bombardment Squadron. The 8th Tactical Bombardment Squadron is being considered separately for this same award for most of this same period. The following units of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing contributed to the service during this period.

- (1) Headquarters, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing
- (2) Headquarters, 35th Combat Support Group
- (3) 35th Field Maintenance Squadron
- (4) 35th Security Police Squadron
- (5) 35th USAF Hospital
- (6) 435th Munitions Maintenance Squadron
- (7) 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron
- (8) 612th Tactical Fighter Squadron
- (9) 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron
- (10) 615th Tactical Fighter Squadron
- (11) 120th Tactical Fighter Squadron
- (12) 35th Avionics Maintenance Squadron
- (13) 35th Civil Engineering Squadron

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(14) 35th Services Squadron

(15) 35th Supply Squadron

(16) 35th Transportation Squadron

b. Only units directly affecting the accomplishments of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, combat mission are being considered for this award. The following support units are to be excluded:

(1) 600th Photo Squadron, Detachment 5

(2) 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, Detachment 1

(3) 1882nd Communications Squadron

(4) OL 1502, USAF PAC Postal and Courier Region

(5) Number 2 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force

(6) 3rd Air Commando Squadron, B Flight

(7) 14th Aerial Port Squadron, Detachment 8

(8) 21st Tactical Air Support Squadron (Advisory Team 39, U.S. Air Liaison Officer, Forward Air Controller Team)

(9) 30th Weather Squadron, Detachment 22

(10) 71st Special Operations Squadron, B Flight

(11) 554th Civil Engineering Squadron

(12) 504th Tactical Air Support Squadron, Detachment 1

(13) 6004th Support Squadron, Detachment 4

(14) Office of Special Investigation, Detachment 5007

2. If approved, this will be the second time this award has been presented to the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing.

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3. This unit qualified for award of the Presidential Unit Citation by exemplary gallantry and extraordinary heroism while participating in combat against armed hostile forces. The steadfast determination, professionalism and high esprit de corps demonstrated by the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing have enabled the unit to achieve outstanding success in all phases of combat operations despite the many hardships and repeated challenges of a combat environment. Personnel of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing have consistently displayed the tireless devotion to duty, consummate skill, and unfailing courage requisite for this citation.

4. During the period from 1 October 1968 to 28 February 1970 the Wing lost 31 aircraft in combat. Twelve men gave their lives in support of the combat mission. The base sustained 35 attacks by enemy forces, including one which was repelled by direct ground combat with the enemy. The unit's display of fortitude and gallantry when faced with grave and threatening situations has been truly outstanding, and in the daily performance of the routine aspects of this challenging mission, the men of this unit have proven themselves true professionals.

5. During the period covered for this award the F-100 squadrons assigned to this Wing flew a total of 57,482 combat sorties. A large number of these sorties were flown under marginal weather conditions and in direct support of friendly troops in contact with hostile forces. The bomb damage assessment resulting from these missions was: Enemy Killed by Air (RBA) - 3,039 confirmed and 4,940 estimated; Structures -- 10,519 destroyed and 8,434 damaged; Bunkers - 31,368 destroyed and 9,902 damaged; Sampans - 1,746 destroyed and 722 damaged; 560 gun positions destroyed; 75,502 meters of trench destroyed; 4,010 secondary explosions; 5,048 secondary fires; and 553 trails cut or damaged. Characteristic of the gallant and heroic acts of aircrews of this Wing during this period are the following examples:

a. On 24 January 1969, Major **Norman H. Rushton** launched as the flight lead of two F-100 fighters scheduled for a normal strike mission in the IV Corps area of the Republic of Vietnam. After the first pass in the target area, the number two aircraft, an F-100F burst into flames and the pilots ejected. The instructor pilot, Captain **Gerald Potter**, was able to land in a large river nearby with relative safety. The pilot, first

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Lieutenant **Donald Muller**, landed in a rice paddy surrounded by unfriendly forces. Consequently, Major Rushton decided to give the majority of his support to Lieutenant Muller. Using 20 millimeter at extremely close range, Major Rushton silenced ground fire directed at the downed pilot. Lieutenant Muller, using his emergency radio, informed Major Rushton that his aircraft (Major Ruehton's) was receiving intense ground fire on his low passes. Disregarding this, Major Rushton continued to press his attack using everything at his disposal, including his empty 335 gallon wing tanks, as weapons. When all ordnance was expended, he initiated grass top approaches using afterburner as a psychological weapon. Major Rushton remained on the scene using such tactics until a successful rescue was accomplished. Leaving with minimum fuel, Major Rushton made an emergency landing at Bien Hoa Air Base, Republic of Vietnam. For his gallantry, Major Rushton was awarded the Silver Star.

b. On 15 January 1969, Captain **Bruce G. Hansen** and Major **William H. Neuens** were scrambled at 1910 hours from the Phan Rang Air Base alert facility as Blade 01, a flight of two F-100s carrying two napalm cannisters and two 500 pound high drag bombs each. Contacting the Forward Air Controller (FAC), they learned that a helicopter had been shot down while attempting the extraction of a reconnaissance team. Heavy antiaircraft (27 MM) fire had prevented the rescue of the reconnaissance team and helicopter crew. After locating an area of low terrain by use of maps, the flight let down under the clouds and effected an immediate rendezvous with their Forward Air Controller, Rash Bravo. They held in an area removed from the target in an attempt to maintain an element of surprise and received the target briefing. Conditions which complicated delivery were darkness, a ragged 600 foot ceiling with rain showers, a peak 300 feet higher than the weapons release altitude, and intense and accurate automatic weapons fire. Knowing that they would be subjected to heavy continuous fire and would be unable to climb out of effective ground fire range, they planned opposing, minimum spaced passes. In this manner they would fly the tightest possible pattern and keep maximum fire on target at all times. They returned to the area and within 20 seconds of the first FAC mark, each placed his firebombs directly on target. During the second pass intense fire was received by both aircraft. After obtaining FAC clearance, each pilot made two more bomb passes and five strafe passes in the face of intense hostile fire. Immediate results of this attack were successful evacuation of the downed helicopter

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crew and the reconnaissance team, the destruction of four active automatic weapons sites, and an estimated 20 KBA. The FAC commended the flight on their aggressive patterns and accurate ordnance deliveries. By application of their skills and acceptance of very great danger to themselves, both pilots were directly responsible for the saving of the lives of a considerable number of friendly forces. For their extreme gallantry under most adverse flying conditions, Captain Hansen and Major Neuens were awarded the Silver Star.

c. On 22 February 1969, First Lieutenant **Francis C. Gideon** and Captain **John G. Nettleton** were scrambled as Blade 03 flight from alert status to assist friendly troops in contact. At the time of Blade 03's arrival, Army gunships were supporting the friendly troops. As the Army gunships exhausted their ammunition, the ground commander called for the fighters to begin their strike immediately because a large number of hostile troops were escaping. Lieutenant Gideon began his first napalm run and dropped within 100 meters of the friendlies, killing six hostile soldiers. Captain Nettleton then rolled in with two 500 pound high drags and put them into a tree line exactly , where the FAC requested. Two more passes were made, the bombs impacting directly on the tree line. Each of these passes, and each of the strafe passes that followed, were made on a single run in heading in spite of the intense ground fire to avoid endangering the friendly troops. The FAC suddenly called that he had seen a group of soldiers run into a small dry stream bed and asked for strafe in that area. The pilots then saturated that area with two strafe passes each, killing six more hostile troops. The ground commander was extremely impressed with the accuracy of the strike and the pilot's lack of regard for their own personal safety. For their outstanding air support in the face of intense hostile ground fire, Lieutenant Gideon and Captain Nettleton were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

d. On the night of 7 June 1969, Major **Donald E. Grostic** and First Lieutenant **Claude J. Staylor, III**, launched from the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing Alert Pad as Blade 07 flight to aid Firebase Crook, west of Tay Ninh Special Forces Camp. Attacking under the cover of darkness, the enemy had launched a heavy rocket, mortar, and ground attack against units of the 1st Battalion, 25th Infantry Division. To reach the battle, Blade 07 penetrated 160 miles of inclement weather, including large thunderstorms in which

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both aircraft encountered severe turbulence and were struck by lighting. Electing to continue the mission in view of its importance to the friendly forces, Blade 07 penetrated to below 5,000 feet before breaking into the clear above a layer of broken stratus clouds obscuring portions of the target area which was identified by heavy tracer fire penetrating the darkness. Issue II, the Forward Air Controller, was forced to restrict the run in heading due to the close proximity of impact of artillery from the outpost and also because of American forces only 100 to 200 meters from the enemy positions on which he desired Blade 07 to expend. Working with a "Shadow" C-119 and a "Spooky" C-47 to provide illumination, Blade 07 delivered its bombs and strafe with pinpoint accuracy despite predominantly instrument conditions and a barrage of enemy fire on each of the 12 passes. The enemy broke off its attack and withdrew. A thorough sweep of the battle field the next day revealed that the enemy had left behind 323 dead, of which 40 were credited to Blade 07. For their extreme gallantry under these most adverse flying conditions Major Grostic and Lieutenant Staylor were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

e. On 15 April 1969, Captain **Gerald A. Salome** and First Lieutenant **Wendell L. Cook** were scrambled from alert status at Phan Rang Air Base as Blade 40. Shortly after 0300 hours Fire Support Base Diamond had come under hostile attack, receiving more than 800 rounds in two hours. Above the 1500 foot overcast covering the tiny outpost, several C-47 and C-119 gunships circled, unable to go to work on the target because of the obstructions and low ceiling. Blade 40's pattern had to be north to south to avoid a neutral border. The friendlies were in three areas; the majority were in the base camp 500 meters from the target, and the remainder were in listening posts as close as 100 meters. Descending below the clouds, Blade 40 discovered the ceiling on downwind leg was 1000 feet and on crosswind 500 feet. The ground, except in the immediate target area, was completely obscured. In order to make their deliveries, the pilots had to enter the clouds on final, recover on instruments until in the clear, and then ask for the FAC's mark. The FAC marked an area 100 meters from an outpost and Captain Salome's napalm engulfed the target. As Lieutenant Cook emerged from the clouds on his final, he was caught in the crossfire of two Army helicopters. Evasive action took him back into the clouds where he recovered on instruments. As Captain Salome turned final for strafe, tracers were visible from two 50 caliber machine gun

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sites. Captain Salome saturated the closest site with 20 millimeter cannon fire. The FAC marked the position of the other site and Lieutenant Cook placed his bombs squarely on target as 50 caliber tracers went by his cockpit. Blade 40 flight was credited with 14 KBA, one 50 caliber machine gun site destroyed, eight AK-47 rifles destroyed and five RPG launchers destroyed. Blade 40 flight had expended their ordnance in the worst conditions of darkness, weather and ground fire. For their gallantry under these conditions, Captain Salome and Lieutenant Cook were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

f. On 5 January 1969, Captain **Theodore R. Powell** and Captain **Clyde E. O'Baker** scrambled from alert status as Blade 01 flight to support elements of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 15th Regiment, which had been engaged in heavy contact with the Viet Cong and were helplessly pinned down. When Blade 01 flight arrived at the rendezvous point, they were confronted with marginal weather and approaching darkness. They were advised by Bart 93, the Forward Air Controller, that the previous flight had drawn heavy automatic and small arms fire. Due to the position of the friendlies, only 200 meters to the south, their attack headings would be restricted to east and west with a break to the north. Bart 93 pinpointed the target with a smoke rocket and each aircraft delivered two MK-82 high drag bombs which impacted precisely on target. The ground fire that was concentrated on their aircraft was extremely intense and only by exemplary airmanship did they avoid possible disaster. In the face of increasing ground fire, they pressed the attack, dropping their bombs singly to insure more effective target coverage. Their bombs expended, they made repeated strafing passes, concentrating small bursts on known enemy positions with unerring accuracy. As stated by the FAC, the ground literally erupted with the red embers of tracer fire. Pass after pass was made in an attempt to suppress the enemy and to allow the friendlies the time and coverage they desperately needed to withdraw to new fighting positions. Throughout the strike, the ground commander radioed warnings and positions of ground fire, expressing concern that the fighters could not possibly survive in such an atmosphere. Through the support that Blade 01 gave, the ground troops broke contact with the enemy, which retreated in complete and total disorder. The battle damage assessment later reported, and the trails that were later discovered, confirmed the fact that the enemy had suffered a grave setback. This area had been a Viet Cong stronghold which, in previous

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engagements, had cost many friendly lives. For their gallantry and devotion to duty, Captain Powell and Captain O'Baker were awarded the Silver Star.

g. On 4 December 1969, Captain **Marvin R. Link** and Captain **John P. Dyben** were scrambled as Blade 01 flight from the alert pad to aid elements of the 45th ARVN Regiment who were under heavy enemy attack near Duc Lap Special Forces Camp. At approximately 1400 hours, the 45th ARVN's defensive position on the rim of an extinct volcano two miles southwest of Duc Lap came under heavy attack by a large enemy force assaulting under covering fire from B-40, 107mm, 122mm rockets, mortars and automatic weapons. When Blade 01 flight arrived in the area at 1430, the tactical situation was deteriorating rapidly, several casualties had already been incurred by the 45th ARVN, including severe injuries sustained by the pilot of the command and control helicopter which was disabled by enemy ground fire. Under the control of a U.S. Air Force Forward Air Controller, Walt 14, the fighters prepared their attack. The enemy was presently occupying bunkers within 75 meters of the friendlies and the weather was growing worse; the ceiling, which had been 1,000 feet on arrival of the Blades, was now down to 800 feet. Only one attack heading was possible because of the positions of the friendlies and the nature of the terrain. Before clearing the fighters to attack, Walt 14 required them each to make two dry passes at fairly low altitude over the target to insure that they knew the exact friendly location and to assure the ground commander that they knew the precise attack heading to be used; On each of these passes, both the FAC and the ground commander stated that the flight was taking intense heavy automatic weapons fire. After being cleared to attack, Captain Link made two napalm and two strafe passes while Captain Dyben made three bomb passes and three strafe passes. Throughout the pattern both pilots saw ground fire coming up at them, and on final approach they noted extremely dense fire. Strafe was used on final for each ordnance delivery in an attempt to suppress the ground fire. Deteriorating weather and the nature of the terrain required both pilots to use extremely low angle deliveries which made them particularly vulnerable to enemy ground fire throughout the pattern. Despite continuing losses, the enemy still advanced toward the friendly position. Walt 14 moved each ordnance delivery closer to the friendly position until the final bomb and strafe deliveries were within 75 and 50 meters, respectively, to the friendlies. In spite of heavy ground fire, and with total disregard for their own safety, Captain Link and

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Captain Dyben pressed their attack until all ordnance was expended. They made a major contribution in blunting the enemy's offensive by destroying and damaging many of his fortifications and causing several secondary explosions and sustained fires. In a follow-on report, the FAC, First Lieutenant **Richard G. Gucker**, 23rd ARVN Division stated that had these pilots been less skilled, less brave, and less professional, the outcome and safety of the friendly unit would have been in grave jeopardy." By conspicuous disregard for their own safety, Captain Link and Captain Dyben prevented what could have been the complete loss of the friendly unit. For their gallantry and devotion to duty, Captain Link and Captain Dyben were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

h. While the personnel of the Wing have been awarded many medals that attest to their leadership and gallantry in battle, no praise can be more highly regarded than that of their fellow comrades in arms. The following excerpts from letters of appreciation to the Wing Commander are indicative of the unusually high degree of professionalism and valor constantly displayed by members of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing;

(1) "Congratulations for a job well done are in order for a very close air support mission in support of a unit of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, They delivered all of their ordnance (MK-82, napalm and strafe) within 25 meters of friendly positions. This mission was further complicated by artillery fire that continued throughout the strike and an aerial assault just to the northeast of the hostile position. This required the flight to follow complicated directions from the Forward Air Controller which they did; and to thread their way through numerous helicopters in order to properly align themselves with the target. In spite of the obstacles all ordnance was delivered with pinpoint accuracy and in minimum time. The ground commander assessed this strike as 'Remarkable, the most precise one I've ever seen.' I fully concur with his observations. It was a pleasure to work with these professional fighter pilots. Their airmanship was outstanding." (Letter, 28 October 1968, signed by Major **Raymond E. Konopka**, Air Liaison Officer, 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.)

(2) "Such expert delivery of ordnance which was very close to two different groups of friendlies, I feel is credited with the saving of many United States lives. The hostile

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force, the size of which was undeterminable, could have caused a very difficult situation (attacking two approaching friendly companies making element identification extremely difficult) had it not been for the superior close air support received. Tactical Air once again lived up to its fine tradition in combat. Thanks to you for a duty and honor well done." (Letter, 24 January 1969, signed by Captain **Daniel S. Trial**, Forward Air Controller, 1st Air Cavalry Division, 19th TASS.)

(3) "On the evening of 14 August an immediate airstrike was ordered for numerous rocket and mortar positions and associated storage sites northwest of Duc Hue, RVN. Blade 03 flight arrived on station at 1945, well after sunset. There were no flareships available and artillery was unable to obtain clearance for their illumination rounds. Issue 01, who had just directed three strikes on the target, was night adapted and because of target importance, decided to put them in without light. The rendezvous was complicated by a ragged 2000 foot ceiling with scattered showers and a faulty radio receiver on lead. A strong surface wind quickly dissipated the marking smoke, but by flying a tight pattern both aircraft put their first two bombs in the target area, The FAC fired a mark which hit the flash site and told the fighters to expend their last two bombs directly on it. Lead's pair extinguished the smoke just as a 120 MM mortar round impacted on the camp. Two's bombs overlapped Lead's, completing the destruction of one 120 MM mortar and the three man crew. This was a superb display of accuracy when the chips were down. The fact that they were able to pick up the marking round at all was surprising with the darkness, low ceiling and surface wind against them, and then, realizing the importance of the target, to dive low to assure accuracy, into the area antiaircraft fire had just come from was an act of valor very much appreciated by the members of the 5th Special Forces at Duc Hue." (Letter, 17 August 1969, from Lt. Colonel **Robert Straughan IV**, Air Liaison Officer, 25th Infantry Division, praising pilots of the 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing for action at Due Hue on 14 August 1969.)

(4) "As a result of the flight's demonstrated professionalism, 12 structures were destroyed, 3 structures were damaged, 2 bunkers were destroyed, 1 large electrical generator was destroyed and 12 enemy personnel were killed by this airstrike. The ground commander verbally relayed his gratitude for an outstanding job done by Yellow

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Jacket 31 flight and I wish to relay it in writing along with my own." (Letter, 3 November 1968, from Major **Floyd B. Sweet**, ALO/PAC, 2nd Brigade, 9th U.S. infantry Division.)

(5) "On the evening of 8 August 1969, Blade 01 flight, performed an air mission west of 12 Highlander Heights. I would like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of the 2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, for the highly impressive and professional manner in which the air mission was executed. Despite the hazards of mountainous terrain and poor visibility due to approaching darkness and rain showers, Blade 01 flight daringly delivered their ordnance precisely on target. As on numerous occasions in the past in support of this Brigade, Air Force tactical air firepower was prompt, devastating, and very impressive to the troops on the ground. I assure you that the respect and confidence that exists for your fighter pilots among all of our elements has been duly enhanced." (Letter, 10 August 1969, from Colonel **Harold D. Dinney**, Infantry, Commanding.)

(6) "Blade 01 arrived on station in mid-morning and came down below an 800 foot overcast ceiling to deliver devastating ordnance on the enemy position. The pilots of Blade 01 flight dropped their ordnance with exceptional accuracy at minimum distances to give the very best support to our troops. Although under constant enemy ground-to-air fire, Blade 01 made several extra passes to assure themselves of target acquisition and then proceeded to drop their load in single passes which allowed better coverage and connection but placed the pilots in the ground-to--air fire envelope for extended periods of time. The perseverance and professionalism shown by the pilots of Blade 01 flight while under fire resulted in pinpoint munitions delivery and great damage to the hostile forces." (Letter, 30 September 1969, from **Arthur B. Smith**, First Lieutenant, USAF FAC/ALO, 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division.)

(7) The following message was received from Lieutenant General **Ewell**, Commanding General, II Field Forces: "Congratulations! The outcome of the enemy attack on FSB Diamond was great. The officers and men of the 2nd Bn, 25th Inf and supporting units are to be commended for their brilliant defense of their base. The devastating blow delt the 272d NVA Regiment will certainly get the attention of the 9th Division. Many individuals and units have earned pride in the victory of the 2/27

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Wolfhounds. The fine orchestration of US Air Force helicopter gunships, artillery, ground and air launched illumination activities in the support of our men in Fire Support Base Diamond- tore the enemy apart and as stated above certainly got the attention of the enemy 9th Division. My congratulations and thanks for a job well done." (Letter, 16 April, from Major General **Ellis W. Williamson**, USA.)

i. Correspondence such as the above leaves no doubt that the highest valor and professionalism are hallmarks of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing. Personnel of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing have displayed the fortitude, aggressiveness and gallantry which is summed up by the Wing's motto, "Attack to Defend."

j. The 35th Tactical Fighter Wing is the only F-100 Wing in existence which is equipped with the TER 15 (Triple Ejector Rack). The Wing has worked hand-in-hand with the Tactical Fighter Weapons Center in field testing the TER 15. The Wing's outstanding performance with the TER has no doubt resulted in its acceptance. The 815th Tactical Fighter Squadron has been using TER equipped aircraft since October 1968 and the remainder of the squadrons are in the process of converting to the TER.

(1) The men of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing have been instrumental in the pioneering of new tactics and methods of ordnance delivery. They have incorporated the TER into older accepted tactics in order to place ordnance with maximum effectiveness on hostile forces. Through experiment and testing, the pilots of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing have formed the capability of rippling bombs at precise intervals. This has allowed the pilot to cover more target area with more ordnance on a single pass. It has proven highly effective against known enemy locations, road cuts, and area targets. With TERs, the Wing has the increased flexibility of carrying more ordnance than a standard F-100, plus two flare pods on the outboard stations. This is most important in tactical emergencies when time is vital since TER equipped aircraft need not await the arrival of a slower flareship.

(2) With the capability of carrying twice the ordnance on TER equipped aircraft, pilots are able to make 100 percent more hot runs per mission. Although this keeps the pilot in the ground fire envelope longer, this risk is willingly accepted to obtain

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maximum effectiveness and maximum target destruction.

k. Because of Phan Rang's strategic location, pilots of the wing fly in all four Corps areas of the Republic of Vietnam. They fly in terrain varying from rugged mountainous to flat delta regions. Many strikes are flown in close proximity to the Cambodian border. Often these attacks are conducted with friendly troops less than 100 meters away. The low visibilities and ceilings often encountered, coupled with the ground fire encountered on many of their missions are a testimony to the pilots' courage and superb airmanship.

1. Pilots of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing frequently call controlling agencies to request follow-on targets requiring 20 millimeter strafing and other ordnance if fuel and ammunition permit, after their fragged target has been struck. This has resulted in substantial damage to hostile forces over and above what is expected on a normal fragged target. This willing desire to deliver the maximum amount of ordnance per mission without regard to the increased exposure to hostile fire typifies the dedication of the pilots of the Wing.

m. There are many other instances in which members of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing have made additional and valuable contributions to the United States objectives in South Vietnam. These include extending tours, volunteering for additional combat missions, flying with local Forward Air Controllers, and flying Spooky, Shadow, and combat support missions. Many of the pilots have served tours as Misty Forward Air Controllers. Members of the Wing have undertaken many Civic Action projects and currently support two orphanages and a school in a surrounding community. They have made numerous trips to the surrounding countryside, building structures and aiding the pacification program. These additional contributions are evidence of the Wing's untiring devotion to the United States effort in Vietnam.

n. During this period, the 435th Munitions Maintenance Squadron has been responsible for the loading of over 139,000 bombs of all types and over 24,000 2.75 inch rockets. With the assignment of the loading crews to the maintenance squadron rather than to individual tactical fighter squadrons, overall efficiency has been vastly improved and mission effectiveness greatly increased. F-100 aircraft assigned to the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing employ the TER 15

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system. Although minor technical difficulties have been experienced with the system, the Wing has maintained a hung ordnance rate lower than all other F-100 units in 7th Air Force for fourteen out of the sixteen months it has been TER equipped. Also, the Wing was credited with a Munitions Effectiveness Rate well above the 7th Air Force average for this same period.

(1) The workload of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Section was substantially increased during this period, due primarily to the increased hostile attacks on the base. During the period from 1 October 1968 to 28 February 1970, there were over 135 major incidents which required submission of formal reports. These included eleven aircraft crashes which required the removal of damaged or partially armed ordnance. An example of their professionalism occurred when EOD personnel entered an area where two aircraft had been mortared and 20 millimeter shells were exploding. By removing nearly sensitized, scorched bombs, bulk explosives and hundreds of 20 millimeter projectiles, EOD personnel made the area safe in a minimum amount of time without causing further damage to property or injury to personnel. During this same attack, EOD personnel recovered more than 100 items of explosives from bodies of Viet Cong sapper teams that had attempted to penetrate the base perimeter. As a result of this action, three members of the EOD unit were decorated for heroism. MACV units in the area have called upon EOD many times for assistance. There were 17 instances of locating and dearming buried mines or booby traps. These items are extremely hazardous since they are planted by professionals. A letter recognizing the professional operations conducted by the EOD teams was received from the Senior Province Advisor for these efforts.

o. No one at Phan Rang Air Base has been immune to the inherent hazards of a combat zone. The base has been subjected to harassment, sabotage, and numerous probes by hostile forces. On several occasions personnel have been killed or wounded and United States Government property has been damaged as a result of these hostile acts. Despite these hazardous conditions, the men of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing have performed tirelessly and with great skill. Members of subordinate support squadrons and attached units have demonstrated, in numerous instances, the same courage and professional approach displayed to such a high degree by the aircrew members of the F-100 squadrons. A case in point is Master Sergeant **David A. Surette**. Sergeant Surette distinguished himself by heroism as Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron Flight Line Crew. In the early morning

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hours of 26 January 1969, Phan Rang Air Base came under attack by mortars and sapper forces. During the first mortar attack, one round impacted directly on a fully loaded F-100 causing it to explode and burst into flames. Sergeant Surette immediately drove to the nearby revetments to assess the damage. Noting that several other aircraft had been damaged by shrapnel and were leaking fuel in the direction of the fire, Sergeant Burette directed and assisted the fire fighting crew in an attempt to extinguish the flaming aircraft. He saw that the fire could not be controlled and that bombs and ammunition aboard the burning aircraft might explode at any time. Disregarding his own personal safety, he and two other men towed two F-100 aircraft from the immediate vicinity of the fire, which now was causing the 20 millimeter ammunition to explode. Under his direction and guidance all aircraft were defueled to prevent similar fires from more incoming mortar rounds. He then went back to inspect all other aircraft near the fire for fuel leaks. Finding none, he again assisted the fire department in their efforts to control the blaze. During the entire attack, Sergeant Surette was constantly on the radio, keeping maintenance control advised of the situation. As a result of his actions, at least two and possibly as many as seven F-100 aircraft were saved from destruction. For his heroic actions and unselfish dedication Sergeant Burette was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device.

p. During this period, the 35th Combat Support Group has displayed unusual diligence and superior devotion to duty in dedicating themselves to the support of the combat mission.

(1) On 7 June 1969, the base received a daylight attack at 1620 hours, The Consolidated Base Personnel Office was hit by one of the three 107 millimeter rockets which was launched against the base. The 107 millimeter rocket impacted approximately one foot outside the CBPO, causing extensive damage. One NCO¹ was killed instantly and three others wounded by shrapnel, one very seriously. Key officers and NCOs of the Directorate of Personnel/CBPO quickly organized a confused and scared group of airmen into an orderly and manageable force. Despite a lack of power and the destruction of a large part of the CBPO, action was immediately started to implement casualty reporting of those personnel wounded and killed during the attack. Ten casualty reports were made within the four hour time frame required. The following day personnel reported for duty as usual and clean-up of the damaged area commenced. On Monday, 9 June 1969, the CBPO was back in full operation. Morale and efficiency of the CBPO

¹ Walter Joseph Dart Jr. 35th CSS was killed as the result of this mortar attack.

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personnel has continued at a high peak since the attack.

q. Throughout the cited period, the 35th Security Police Squadron demonstrated outstanding courage and professional ability in defending Phan Rang Air Base against hostile directed fire attacks and attempts to penetrate the perimeter. During 46 attacks in which some 466 mortar rounds, 106 rounds of 107 millimeter rocket fire and two B-40 rocket rounds impacted on the installation, the squadron's ability to provide effective individual and counterbattery fire minimized the loss of friendly lives. On 26 January 1969, elements of the 351st North Vietnamese Army Sapper Battalion mounted a large scale attack, supported by 82 millimeter mortar and 107 millimeter rocket fire. The 35th Security Police Squadron repelled the attack, killing 14 of the hostile forces and capturing one during the night long action. Only 16 friendly troops were wounded and none were killed. A major achievement was maintaining the base in an operational status, with sorties being flown at 0755 the next morning. The following is an excerpt from a letter to the Wing Commander from Major General **Baker**, commending the outstanding acts of the 35th Security Police Squadron: "I commend you and the other officers and men of the 35th Wing. Your successful defense of Phan Rang Air Base against the sapper attack of 26 January 1969 is a lesson learned in excellence. Of Significant note was the astute interpretation of ground intelligence information by your Base Chief of Security Police. His timely reaction to the meager information available resulted in a base defense posture both alerted and flexible. The professionalism and courage displayed by the security policemen, their augmentees, base fire fighters and support personnel was very gratifying. Every man on your base is to be commended for his contribution in repelling the enemy." For their actions, numerous awards for valor and heroism were presented to personnel of the squadron, including an Air Force Cross, six Silver Stars, and 11 Bronze Stars with "V" Device. Since the attack, the enemy has maintained the ability and initiative to launch crewserved standoff weapons attacks. Security police counterbattery fire, however, has made this tactic expensive, as vouched for by a major secondary explosion and frequent evidence of blood trails at launch positions. This is verified by the enemy's growing preference for longer range 107 millimeter rockets over the more accurate but shorter range 82 millimeter mortars.

r. As one of the most unheralded, yet vital organizations in the Wing, the 35th United States Air Force Dispensary provided superior assistance during this period. Although understaffed, the dispensary emergency room was able to treat an average of 1400 to 1500 persons a month.

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A total of 1896 emergency calls were received which required a quick reaction; the difference between life and death occurred in a minimum of 74 cases.

(1) On 7 June 1969, Major **Robert E. Gold**, Flight Surgeon, and Master Sergeant **Julian L. Fisher**, Medical Aidman, recovered five personnel wounded during an intensive hostile rocket barrage against the base. Immediately after a 107 millimeter rocket landed within one hundred feet of their location, Major Gold and Sergeant Fisher administered resuscitative techniques to the casualties. After insuring that everything possible was administered to those most critically wounded, they treated three other persons and moved all the casualties to the shelter of a revetted building to prevent further injury from incoming rockets. Major Gold and Sergeant Fisher were awarded the Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device for their professional dedication.

(2) The dispensary was responsible for base-wide immunizations with a 100 percent completion monthly rate, aeromedical services, medical civic actions, sanitation surveillance, and special support to the security police. Noteworthy achievements in these areas include the repositioning of medical material at strategic locations throughout the base to allow for the rapid establishment of aid stations when needed. A complete voluntary program has been established, dispatching Medical Civic Action Program (REDCAP) Teams daily to local villages and hamlets. These teams treat 750 to 1000 Vietnamese monthly.

s. The following awards and decorations have been awarded to personnel of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing during this period;

Air Force Cross	1
Legion of Merit.....	3
Silver Star	22
Distinguished Flying Cross (H)	93
Distinguished Flying Cross (A)	194
Bronze Star	348

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Air Medal 1153

Air Force Commendation Medal 2561

Airman's Medal 9

Purple Heart 78

In addition, members of the Wing have been awarded numerous decorations from the Vietnamese Government, including 14 Crosses of Gallantry with Silver Stars.

t. The 35th Tactical Fighter Wing has displayed a monumental degree of valor, tenacity, aggressiveness, and dedication while participating in armed conflict against hostile forces. In spite of often difficult and hazardous circumstances, the morale and esprit de corps of the Wing have remained extremely high. The superior results obtained bear testimony to this fact. The 35th Tactical Fighter Wing has made a substantial and significant contribution to the United States effort in the Republic of Vietnam, and in so doing, has reflected the highest credit upon itself and the United States Air Force.

6. The service of the organization recommended has been honorable subsequent to the act or service for which recommended.

7. Other organizations are not being recommended for the same act or service.

8. An unclassified citation is attached.

9. Other recommendations for award to the same organization are pending: None.

10. A previous award has not been made to the organization for the same act or service described.

11. If the recommendation is approved, the award presentation data is desired as soon as

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possible. The award element should be forwarded to Commander, Seventh Air Force, APO San Francisco 96307.

GEORGE S. BROWN, General, USAF
Commander

3 Atchs²

1. Summary
2. Proposed Press Release
3. Citation

NOTE: This recommendation was never accepted. Is it possible that it got lost in the system? Would it be possible to re-submit?

Additional information on the following individuals cited in this document can be found in previous issues of the Phan Rang Newsletter. They are: Norman Rushton, issue 221. (*“Lucky Devil” Pilots live up to name*); Donald Muller, issues 125, (*Two 120th Flights Blast Targets in Offensive Aid*), 221 and 269; William Neuens, issues 17, 79, 122, 125, (*Lucky Devils Prove Luck In Dual Bailout, Pickup*), and 259; Donald Grostic, issues 2, 59 and 60; Wendel Cook, issues 1, 75, 105 and 197; Theodore Powell, issue 41; Clyde O’Baker, issues 41, 74 and 228.

This document was obtained from Fold3 a company of Ancestry in Lehi, Utah and was transcribed to the Phan Rang Newsletter by Douglas Severt. If you have any comments or suggestions concerning this document or any others, please contact [me](#). This recommendation contains so many amazing stories by individuals who performed admirably and often above expectations. Warfare in Southeast Asia, with obstacles such as weather, terrain, and foliage was probably unique to the Air Force fighters but they overcame all of those, with successful mission accomplishment and it should not go unrecognized. I hope that you have enjoyed this newsletter. To see a list of all previous newsletters click [here](#). To unsubscribe to Phan Rang News, dougsevert@gmail.com and put ‘unsubscribe’ in subject line.

² Attachments are not available.