

199th RAC "Swamp Foxes"

Kien Tuong Provence (Moc Hoa)

Jan. 1968-Sep. 1968

I was a 1LT who had arrived in Viet Nam during October 1967 with the 203rd RAC, which was headquartered at Phu Hiep RVN near Tuy Hoa II Corps. I was flying out of Kontum in support of Forward Operations Base (FOB) 2 supporting Special Forces Operation in Cambodia, Laos, and Viet Nam, when I was notified to return to the Company Headquarters. I departed Kontum RVN, retrieved my gear, and before I knew it, was enroute to the Me Kong Delta.

Upon arrival at Vinh Long Airfield (VVVL), after a long first flight in a U-1 Otter, I loaded my duffle bag and footlocker onto a $\frac{3}{4}$ ton truck and reported to the 199th RAC. After a unit orientation, a standardization check ride, and some night airfield security cover flights, I was assigned directly to support operations out of the northern Delta city of Moc Hoa as a sector pilot. I replaced CPT Gerald Gouge while CPT Elijah (Hoke) Smith was the senior sector pilot. The Third Platoon, to which I was assigned, was led by CPT/MAJ Richard Capps and my section leader CPT Skip Hough, who were located and operated from the city of Long Xuyen. Four Swamp Foxes were located at Moc Hoa along with a POL specialist. Two armed O1-G's, each with two 2.75 rockets and one M-60 machine gun under each wing, were crewed by two E-5 crew chiefs and a LT or CPT to pilot. Additionally, an Air Force O1 Bird Dog, crewed by a MAJ, CPT, and an E-6 crew chief, was used to support the two Air Force forward air controllers (FAC's). VVMH (Moc Hoa) airstrip was constructed at or barely above sea level from dredged sand from the river and covered with compacted orange laterite. Located at the south edge of the city, the north-south oriented runway was capable of handling Caribou, C-130, and C-124 aircraft. I believe 5 reveted aircraft stalls on the west side, nearly halfway down the runway, consisted of a sandbagged ammunition conex, a sandbagged aviation gas and lubrication bunker reinforced by 55 gallon drums filled with sand and an airfield operations bunker (conex) to accommodate a daytime advisory service. A separate reveted area was available to protect the M49 aviation gas tanker. Stacked 55 gallon drums filled with sand protected the entire perimeter of the service area and aircraft stalls. Immediately adjacent to and connected with the aircraft service area was a Special Forces training company which provided security for the airfield and protection for the aircraft. "Moc Hoa Advisor", using FM radio provided airfield-landing information and estimated wind conditions to visiting Air America, USAF resupply, and Army helicopter operations.

Day to day operations at Moc Hoa Airfield were varied. As a staging field for 44 Special Tactical Zone (STZ) operations, the east side of the runway was configured to accommodate the refueling and rearming of helicopter operations. Three 10,000-gallon JP-4 fuel bladders were dispersed along the runway interconnected with a pumping system to accommodate hot refueling. C-130 Bladder Birds and resupply aircraft would discharge their fuel and roll off pallets of 2.75 rockets and M-60 ammunition. The unpacking and assembly of rockets fell to the crew chiefs, POL specialist, and two MACV paid female Vietnamese helpers. For large operations 44 STZ augmented Moc Hoa with FAARP personnel.

Based on intelligence reports and enemy activities, preplanned air strikes were approved to support the province. One of the two Air Force FAC's would depart and direct the Air Force aircraft to the target area, control the strike, provide a bomb damage assessment (BDA), usually exaggerated, and return to Moc Hoa. Most missions were under an hour and a half duration. Few VNAF aircraft visited Moc Hoa to my recollection. Night operations were not very frequent. However, when the need arose, airfield lighting was provided by bean bag lights and number-10 cans filled with sand and J-P 4 fuel were ignited and used to mark the east side of

the landing strip as well as the entrance to the revetment area. Swam Fox pilots usually flew six days a week in two shifts, varying times, morning and afternoon, with some early evening flights. The average pilot logged 4 hours daily to stay within the 100-hour limit per month imposed by headquarters without a waiver.

Moc Hoa was an isolated remote city near the Cambodian border in the northern Me Kong Delta. It was the headquarters of Kien Tuong Province and also the headquarter for B-41, a Special Forces unit controlling seven outlying A Teams. The following is a description of those Special Forces Team bases that I supported:

B-41; Moc Hoa. A north-south runway made of orange latrite stone surface capable of accommodating a C-130 aircraft. Moc Hoa also had a 155 MM Howitzer and 4.2 MM mortar.

A-411; My Phuoc Tay had only a heliport with 155 MM Howitzer for fire support.

A-412; Kinh Quan II, was a heliport only with a 105 MM Howitzer.

A-413; Binh Thanh Thon (BTT) was a dirt unimproved strip usable only during dry season for landing. It was used by Caribou, but nothing larger. Resupply was by airdrop or low level extraction by larger aircraft. This camp also had a 105 MM Howitzer for fire support. I seldom landed at this site.

A-414; Thanh Tri had only a heliport. I cannot remember if it had any indirect fire support. But I am sure they did have some.

A-415; Tuyen Nhon had an unimproved dirt road strip which was blocked off when needed for landing aircraft.

A-416; My Dien was a heliport only with a 4.2 MM mortar.

A-417; Cai Cai had an unimproved dirt strip usable only in the dry season for landing. It was Caribou and smaller usable. They had a 4.2 MM mortar.

The entire northern boundaries of Kien Tuong Province constituted the border between Cambodia and Vien Nam. Flying along the border invited hostile fire from numerous known hostile areas and sites. Rules of engagement prevented fire into Cambodia. The area south of the border was, for the most part, under VC control and used to infiltrate supplies and enemy personnel into the delta. Most daily missions were self-generated, as we provided real time reports of enemy activity and movement to all of the outlying A Teams and the B-41 TOC. Clearance to engage targets outside the free fire zones was obtained from the A team personnel. As I flew West, I would contact BTT and ask if any troops were in the field, and if they had any areas of interest for me to V.R. Based on the input received, I would accommodate their request or continue on, primarily looking for signs of enemy activity. If enemy personnel were observed, clearance was obtained and the target engaged. Similar contact with each A Team was standard daily operating procedures. Special operations such as airboat patrols in the plain of reeds or other interdiction missions with indigenous ground troops required closer coordination, but usually consisted of visual reconnaissance, reconnaissance by fire, adjusting indirect fire support or command and control support.

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