

(Morgan Gandy)

SAIGON, 13200, (UPIS)--Security officials have long believed Communist guerrilla bands could shell the Saigon airport, as they did Wednesday morning. But the sizzling political crisis in ^{this} ~~the~~ ^{city} capital made their job easier ~~for~~ for the worst attack on any airbase to date.

"Security around the airbase was ~~relax~~ relaxed because of the political situation," one ~~high~~ high-ranking ~~A~~ Vietnamese security officer explained. He said some of the Vietnamese regular army units, which would normally be patrolling on the outer perimeter of the airbase, had been confined to barracks or assigned other responsibilities connected with the anti-government political demonstrations and turbulence.

(More--Miller--BD)

first add--morgan gandy--saigon

x x x and turbulence x x x

Saigon's Tan Son Nhut civilian-military airport--one of the busiest in the world--lies three miles north of the center of the city. The hub of the airport is the radio control tower and the main jet-length runway, where distinguished businessmen land in commercial airlines ^{on one end} ~~on one side~~ only seconds after American jet fighters screech off the other end. The radio tower was knocked out during the twenty-minute, multi-million dollar attack Wednesday morning.

~~This~~ ^{AYE}
This hub of the airport is secured by barbed wire fences, outposts, Vietnamese and American security forces. ~~However,~~ the Communist guerrillas, attacking with mortars and recoilless ² rifles did not penetrate this inner defense perimeter.

(More--Miller--BD)

second add--morgan gandy--saigon

x x x defense perimeter x x

Within this inner barbed wire perimeter, more than ten thousand American troops are based, mostly for conducting the airwar against the Viet Cong guerrillas in the rice paddies. The American units have security responsibility for their aircraft and helicopters, property of the American government, but their duties donotprnot go beyond the barbed wire fence.

The second rim of defense--beyond the barbed wire--would under times of political quiet--be maintained and patrolled by one Vietnamese airborne battalion, and one Vietnamese army battalion security sources said.

However, since the Buddhist-inspired demonstrations and turbulence designed to topple the Saigon government, the Vietnamese airborne battalion was notrptnot permitted to patrol. Instead, it was ordered to remain in their barracks in case they were needed to stop the Buddhist-inspired rioting, street fighting and stoning of Americans in Saigon. The Vietnamese army battalion had been shifted during the crisis from airport security against the Viet Cong to protecting Vietnamese government installations, such as the government radio station, after the pro-Buddhist students attempted to seize it several weeks ago.

(More-Miller-BD)

third add--morgan gandy--saigon

x x x weeks ago x x x.

The elite paratrooper battalion and the regular army battalions were replaced with only one battalion of regional forces, which are ~~in~~ not ~~not~~ as ~~was~~ well equipped, trained or paid as the regular units.

Beyond this ~~perimeter~~ comes the ~~3~~ third ~~security~~ perimeter line, which on the southwest side of the airport was to be ~~covered~~ secured by one Vietnamese army battalion, one Ranger battalion and local popular and ~~regional~~ regional forces under the command of the Tam Binh district, Gia Dinh province. Gia Dinh is the doughnut province surrounding the city of Saigon; the airport lies in the this province, not ~~not~~ in the Saigon city limits.

However, because of the political unrest in Saigon, elements of the Vietnamese army battaion and the Ranger battalion were brought into the city limits of Saigon to ~~maintain~~ attempt to maintain law and order against the rioting demonstrators.

This left ~~one~~ ^{Small} ~~one~~ smattering of local popular and regional paramilitary forces, plus ^{Regulars} elements of the ~~regional~~ regular battalions to do the job of patrolling.

^{is the area covering}
Aye total of twenty five square miles covers the defense of these three perimeter rings.

(More--Miller--BD)

fourth add--morgan gandy--saigon

x x x perimeter rings x x x

"But you know we did not have enough troops to cover all that ground all the time," one Vietnamese security officer explained. "And the paramilitary units were a little lazy in patrolling anyway."

Between the second and third security ~~ring~~ phaselines-- ~~approximately two thousand~~ somewhere between one to five thousand meters from the ~~airport~~ airport x' radio tower--the Viet Cong guerrillas, roughly fifteen to thirty of them, brought in ~~at least~~ at least two mortars and one seventy five recoilless rifle to ~~shoot~~ bombard the airbase.

They placed their base plates and mortar ~~tub~~ tubes near the village of Ba Queo repeat Ba Queo, according to official sources. This rural peasant village of ~~shacks~~ ^{Huts And} a small market, ~~surrounde~~ is surrounded by fruit groves and bushes. ~~Directly west of~~ ~~there~~

~~Directly eight miles w~~

TOWARDS CAMBODIA -

Eight miles ~~directly~~ west of this village ~~in the Plain of Reeds~~ and an hours march away lies Duc Hoa, the Viet Cong headquarters for their units specializing in sabotage, demolitions and small unit attacks. Duc Hoa is on the fringe of the Communist stronghold called the Plain of Reeds, a marshy ~~and~~ wasteland that has been under the Communist control ~~an~~ even during the French Indo-China War.

(More--Miller--ED)

fifth add--morgan gandy--saigon

x x x indo-china war x x x.

Security officials have estimated that in an eight-hour march, the Viet Cong could conceivably move divisions of troops from Cambodia to Saigon

This specialized unit in Duc Hoa is commanded by aye hump-backed man in his forties, whose alias is Ca Nhi, security sources said.

At the Saigon security headquarters aye photo of this man is posted--
~~has~~ aye one million piastre (US\$9000) repeat nine thousand dollar
~~reward~~ ^{Put up.} reward has been ~~posted~~ for his ~~head~~ head.

Almost all of the small rural villages around Saigon have been subject to minor terrorism within ~~the~~ recent weeks. Two or three policemen aye night are killed or kidnapped from these villages; police checkpoints and headquarters are regularly attacked--sometimes overrun--as the Communists have tightened their noose around the capital city.

"It would take hundreds of thousands of troops shoulder to shoulder with x garden rakes digging up the whole perimeter all the time to prevent an attack like this," one American Air Force officer explained. "The V. C. (Viet Cong) can put mortar tubes under any bush any ~~the~~ time a nd we can notrptnot even ~~see~~ ^{SEE} them.

"It's like trying to find aye white mouse in aye coup," he explained.

"Besides, they w still have notrptnot captured those hoods that mortared the United Nations in New York, have they?"

(Endit--Miller--BD)