

# Jets to Ashes—As the Yanks Saw It

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BIEN HOA, Viet Nam.

"I felt sooner or later this would come, and sure enough it has."

Capt. John Johnson of the United States Air Force looked out over the Bien Hoa airfield at the heaps of ashes and wreckage that only a few hours before had been six B-57 jet bombers. Communist Viet Cong mortar fire destroyed them in a surprise attack at 26 minutes after midnight Friday.

"The Viet Cong have been mortaring villages near here, and we've been fired on while landing at the field," explained Capt. Johnson, pilot of a B-57. "We all feel very

fortunate it was not worse than it was.

"I just hope they don't come again tonight. I'm going to sleep with my hard hat (steel helmet) on my toes so I know where it is in case they attack again."

"I feel like Custer," lamented Maj. H. F. O'Neill of Knoxville, Tenn., commander of the 8th Tactical Bomb Squadron of the 2d Air Division, to which the wrecked bombers belonged. "I don't have much of a command left."

Recalling the attack, Capt. Johnson said, "I had just gotten my bed warm when the first burst hit the billeting area. Something started to burn. There was a lot of smoke.

"The next burst was closer.

My navigator and I started toward the runway, and got a burst of tracers. We crawled up a ditch for 50 yards and across a soccer field to the line where the B-57's were. The bombers were burning fiercely."

Several hundred yards from the runway stand the long wooden huts in which the U. S. Army's 118th Aviation Co. is billeted. All four Americans slain in the attack and most of the 31 U. S. wounded were billeted there. Seven huts were hit by the mortars.

Rain fell through the demolished roof of one of the huts yesterday, soaking a stack of mattresses and paperback books lying on the floor. One of the books was "The Guns of August." Another was titled "Promise at Dawn."