

TET

January 31st, 1968 was TET - Below is Verbatim, the letter I wrote home just hours after it hit - right where I was in II Field Force Headquarters. I still have the original letter. This was OCR scanned in.

"31 Jan 68

Dear Ones

Funny thing happened at my "safe" headquarters last night. I wrote Aunt Arleen a letter before 10:00 PM telling her how I was out of the war now, went to bed, and at 3:05 WHAM! The 122 mm rockets began hitting the headquarters. All the officers who have never heard a shot fired in anger before started running toward the bunkers and ditches with ludicrous results- running into clothes lines, one guy burst through a screen door, several conked heads trying to get into the same bunker, half clothed, shorts with helmets, rifles without shoes etc etc.

By the time the third rocket hit I figured I had better get on the ground floor, at least, since this wooden building isn't very sturdy. So I put on my pants(another rocket hit), I put on my boots(another rocket hit), I grabbed my helmet, camera and pistol and found a pile of sandbags. I got on the side of the barracks right behind the perimeter defense where I could see Bien Hoa airbase and watch the fireworks. There were plenty. I judge about 50-75 rockets hit Bien Hoa, and big fires were started and a couple of planes went up in balls of fire. Every few minutes another one would hit our headquarters, and three of them made rocks and metal rain down on the tin roofs of my billet. One hit in front of the mail shack and the Signal headquarters and blew in all the windows and put holes in the walls. Nothing critical was destroyed, however.-

Vietnam War (11)

Category: Vietnam 1967-1968

Published: Wednesday, 28 September 2011 13:44

Written by dave

Hits: 3663

The last round landed right across the road from me, the sparks flew and the stuff rained down. We took about 10 rounds. Haven't heard incoming rockets since 1951 in Korea when the 7th Cav CP was hit.

All around this area helicopters, gunships, "spooky"ships flares and artillery scrambled. I could even set my camera by flare light.

Then things quieted down while fires burned here and there. I went back to bed about 4:00, fell asleep, then at about 4:45 crack!

The ground attacks began. Tracers were everywhere, spent rounds caroomed off the tin roof and once again everybody scrambled into bunkers. From then on until now(10:30 AM) its been one big war around Saigon, the headquarters, the air bases and the ammo dump.

About 7 I went up to the office(the cooks wern't feeding yet and except for gun ships throwing down rockets off in the distance it looked like it might quiet downbut it didn't. First thing that happened was the armored personnel carrier platoon that was guarding the headquarters made a sweep across the road in front of the head quarters to check out a shantytown. An RPG rocket hit the platoon leader's PC, wounding him and knocking out the PC. So since then there has been a battle royal going on across the road as Huey Cobras, the newest gunships have been plastering the area. It is so close that when the gunships make their machine gun runs, the cases and links fall down onto the tin roof of the barracks, scaring hell out of everybody.

Then I was standing out between my building and the TOC when the Long Binh ammo dump went up with an enormous explosion as big as a small atomic bomb, with the same mushroom cloud and all. I first saw the shock wave coming at us across the valley, called everybody out to see the huge ball of fire, then the wave hit, shattering windows and knocking things off the shelves, and fluorescent tubes out of their

sockets onto the floor

So I decided it would not be a business as usual day after all, and sent all my section back to their barracks and bunkers. On the way the mess hall had opened, we served ourselves (the waitresses all were off for TET (and I suppose, to carry ammo for the Viet Cong.) I had a good breakfast- coffee, cheese omelet, sweet roll, tomato juice-with - all my section, and the mess hall was full, when wham!

The gunships opened up on a section of woods right behind the headquarters, and the explosions rattled the tea cups. It (a shell) just ricocheted off the roof above me) It was amusing to watch the administrative types wearing flack vests and helmets to breakfast. Any way that didn't seem like a very good idea, to crowd into the mess hall, so we dispersed to our various billets.

You may wonder why I am not doing something important, but this headquarters is so big that when the planners are through and the shooting begins we are just in the way. Actually we may help man the TOC and the alternate OP which Gen Ware has just been told to set up- in case this one goes out of action.

The VC are making a desperate bid to hit everywhere-they claymored III Corps headquarters, got 100 men onto the airstrip at Ton Son Nhut, attacked the Embassy (A platoon of the 101st Airborne was landed on the roof of the Embassy at first light and believe it or not it was a 'hot' LZ.

An ammo carrying chopper got shot up getting a resupply to the Marine guards. 'The headquarters of JGS (Vietnamtop staff) is under attack, as are a number of other headquarters. Of course every big district or province headquarters is under attack too, as you have undoubtedly heard, but "the war around the perimeter of IIFV

Headquarters is infinitely more interesting right now. If my ears are right I can hear a 10 ship combat assault coming in now.

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When I got back to my room after the 8 AM attack the shock of the explosion had knocked down the small colored picture of David, Becky and Edward which I had stuck in the molding in the wall.

But other than that, no damage done to either me or my few possessions 'The war continues in Vietnam. I think I will go to lunch.

Love s/David"

So TET officially started.