

## 56<sup>th</sup> SECURITY FORCES SQUADRON



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

Squadron "B", 56th Airdrome Group designated, 28 Jul 1947

Activated, 15 Aug 1947

Discontinued, 1 Aug 1948

56<sup>th</sup> Air Police Squadron, Fighter, Jet constituted, 14 Jun 1948

Activated, 1 Aug 1948

Redesignated 56<sup>th</sup> Air Police Squadron, 20 Jan 1950

Inactivated, 6 Feb 1952

Activated, 15 Feb 1963

Discontinued and inactivated, 1 Jan 1964

Redesignated 56<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron and activated, 16 Mar 1967

Organized, 8 Apr 1967

Squadron "B", 56th Airdrome Group and 56<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron consolidated, 12 Oct 1984.

Consolidated squadron retains 56<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron designation.

Inactivated, 4 Jan 1994

Activated, 1 Apr 1994

Redesignated 56<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron

#### STATIONS

Selfridge Field (later, AFB), MI, 15 Aug 1947-6 Feb 1952

K.I. Sawyer AFB, MI, 1 Apr 1963-1 Jan 1964  
Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand, 8 Apr 1967-30 Jun 1975  
MacDill AFB, FL, 30 Jun 1975-4 Jan 1994  
Luke AFB, AZ, 1 Apr 1994

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **COMMANDERS**

Maj Christophe DeGuelle  
Maj. Michael J. Borders Jr.  
Unknown, 15 Aug 1947-1 Aug 1948  
Unknown, 1 Aug 1948-20 Jan 1950  
Unknown, 20 Jan 1950-6 Feb 1952  
Maj Eugene A. Lamar, 1 Apr 1963-1 Jan 1964  
Cpt Ralph N. Dunlap, 8 Apr 1967  
1LT John W. Ross, 8 Jun 1967  
Cpt Paul N. Scheidel, 15 Aug 1967  
1LT Charles Sprunk, 15 Oct 1967  
Cpt Paul N. Scheidel, 15 Jan 1968  
Maj Melvin N. Toloso, Nov 1968  
Maj Robert V. Jones, 30 Jun 1969  
LTC William D. Raven, 30 Sep 1969  
Maj Gerald R. Frank, 30 Sep 1970  
Maj Renwick F. Mottley, 30 Sep 1971  
Maj James S. Barger, 31 Mar 1972  
Maj Joseph W. Wilson, 30 Jun 1972  
Maj Thomas J. Murphy, 31 Dec 1972  
Maj Gary G. Allison, 31 Mar 1973  
LTC Billie M. Downer, 1 May 1973  
Maj George T. Harper, 15 Mar 1974  
Maj Lewis A. Elam, 31 Mar 1974  
Maj George T. Harper, 30 Sep 1974  
Cpt Charles J. Heubusch, 30 Jun 1975  
LTC B. M. Downer, 30 Jun 1975  
Maj Robert F. Picinus, 17 Jan 1977  
Cpt James M. Randel, 17 Jan 1977  
Maj Kenneth R. Anderson, 2 Feb 1977  
LTC William B. Driggers, Jr., 1 Sep 1978  
Maj Karl J. Woelz, 4 Aug 1979  
Maj Carl E. Gunderson, 12 Dec 1980  
LTC James L. Hendrickson, 14 Oct 1983  
LTC Sydney W. Griffin, 14 Feb 1986  
Maj Jonnie L. Wright, 14 Nov 1988  
Cpt John W. Probst, 12 Jul 1990

LTC David H. Donatelli, 30 Aug 1990  
Maj J. Karen Fiedor, 28 Jun 1993-4 Jan 1994  
Maj Edward N. Addison, 1 Apr 1994  
Maj Eugene V. Morabito, 29 May 1996  
Maj Eugene V. Morabito, 1 Jul 1997  
LTC Allen J. Jamerson, 1 Jul 1998  
Maj Tracey M. Meck, 5 Jul 2000  
Maj Michael D. Ross, Sr., 23 May 2002  
LTC Stephen R. Mezhir, 14 Jun 2004  
Maj Christopher J. DeGuelle, 13 Jul 2007  
LTC Michael J. Borders, Jr., 13 Jun 2008  
Maj Gerald C. Mulhollen, Jr., 14 Jun 2010  
Maj Sean R. Gibbs, 6 Jul 2012

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

None

### **Campaign Streamers**

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase II  
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase III  
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase IV  
TET 69/Counteroffensive  
Vietnam Summer-Fall  
Vietnam Winter-Spring  
Sanctuary Counteroffensive  
Southwest Monsoon  
Commando Hunt V  
Commando Hunt VI  
Commando Hunt VII  
Vietnam Ceasefire

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

## **Decorations**

Presidential Unit Citations  
1 Nov 1968-1 May 1969  
1 Oct 1969-30 Apr 1970  
1 Apr 1972-22 Feb 1973

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat "V" Device:

1 Jun 1970-31 May 1971  
1 Dec 1971-29 Feb 1972

23 Feb 1973-28 Feb 1974

24 Jan-2 May 1975

#### Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jan 1977-1 Jan 1979

1 Jul 1980-30 Jun 1982

1 Jun 1984-31 May 1986

1 May 1987-30 Apr 1989-30

1 Jul 1994-30 Jun 1996

1 Jul 1994-30 Jun 1996

1 Jul 1996-30 Jun 1998

1 Jul 1998-30 Jun 2000

1 Jul 2001-30 Jun 2003

1 Jun [Jul] 2003-30 Jun 2005

1 Jul 2005-30 Jun 2006

1 Jul 2006-30 Jun 2007

1 Jul 2007-30 Jun 2008

1 Jul 2008-30 Jun 2009

1 Jul 2009-30 Jun 2010

1 Jul 2010-30 Jun 2011

#### Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Crosses with Palm

8 Apr 1967-28 Jan 1973

#### EMBLEM



On a blue disc edged with a narrow yellow border, a tan rattlesnake, coiled, with black markings and details, eye yellow, emitting from its open mouth a horizontal yellow lightning bolt. The Lightning Bolt was taken from the insignia of the 56th Combat Support Group, which the 56th Security Police Squadron is a part of. The rattlesnake has 50 Diamonds and six rattles, and

represents the 56th Security Police Squadron. The Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake is very prevalent in the area that the 56th Security Police Squadron is stationed in. The Eastern Diamondback is an appropriate symbol, because it will stand its ground, and will strike when threatened. (Approved, 13 Aug 1979)

## **MOTTO**

READY TO STRIKE

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

On May 13, at 2030 local time, 16 Sikorsky CH-53Cs took off from RTAFB Nakhon Phanom. Shortly after take off, one of the helicopters, Serial Number 68-1033 from the 21st SOS, 56th SPS, fell out of formation, crashed and exploded on impact. All 22 aboard, including four crew, 18 USAF security police and one linguist, were killed in the crash. Other CH-53s landed nearby, but exploding ammunition and burning fuel hindered all rescue attempts. The CH-53 crashed in the Phannanikhom District, 35 miles west of Nakhon Phanom. Officially, the CH-53C was on a routine training mission; the 56th Security Police Squadron tasked with providing support during the MAYAGUEZ incident in 1975. All 22 killed in the crash were awarded the Bronze Star posthumously.

Sgt Jimmy P. Black

Sgt Bobby G. Collums

SSgt Gerald A. Coyle

Sgt Thomas D. Dwyer

Sgt Bob W. Ford

Sgt Gerald W. Fritz, (K-9)

TSgt Jackie D. Glenn

Sgt Darrell L. Hamlin

Sgt Gregory L. Hankamer

Sgt David A. Higgs

SSgt Faleagafula Ilaoa, (K-9)

Sgt Michael D. Lane

Sgt Dennis W. London (K-9)

Sgt Robert P. Mathias

Sgt William R. McKelvey

Amn Edgar C. Moran II

Sgt Tommy R. Nealis

Sgt Robert W. Ross

A Security Police Sentry Dog Handler's Perspective By Phil Carroll

Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, 56th SPS K-9, Tina X768, 1971

It's been called "the worst base in Thailand, but the best base we had in Vietnam." It was the home of the 56th Air Commando Wing, renamed in 1968 the 56th Special Operations Wing. It was the closest U.S. Air Force base to communist North Vietnam, and just "eight clicks" from

communist infested, wartorn Laos. This proximity was extremely convenient for Air Force combat missions flown from there, and a lifesaver for shot-up U.S. aircrews desperate to put it on the ground right now. This proximity also kept the men and dogs of the 56th Security Police Squadron on edge.

Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base (NKP) was just 75 miles from North Vietnam, somewhat north of Vietnam's De-Militarized Zone (DMZ) at the 17th parallel, and a straight 230-mile flight from downtown Hanoi. It was within range of known weapons at communist positions in Laos, but sapper attacks were judged to be its greatest threat. As one former officer in the 56th Security Police Squadron said, "Most of the time it seems we were in some form of higher alert due the threat level. Just North of NKP city was a known Communist Terrorist crossing point. In fact the Sapper Team that attacked Ubon AFB was known to have used that crossing point. Why they by passed us and traveled all the way down to Ubon is not known. I always told our security troops it was because we were just too damn good so they were afraid to hit us."

The point of all this history, at least for this little essay, is there was ample reason for the heavy security at NKP. There was good reason for the Security Police and K-9 guards there to be just a little on edge. Many, including the Captain quoted above, believe that the reason we weren't attacked more often was our obvious, in-depth defensive system. We had: a deep, totally herbicide-denuded perimeter with barbed wire fence, triple concertina razor wire, tanglefoot, electronic pressure sensors, mines, more concertina, more barbed wire, and bright, directional perimeter lighting; a series of high guard towers all around the perimeter; machine-gun bunkers backing up the towers; numerous security posts manned by the 300-man combat-trained Security Police Squadron with M-16s and M-60s; nighttime K-9 patrols by 65 sentry dogs and handlers (call sign "Nightfighter"), each with a CAR-15 and 10 magazines of 5.56; six to eight patrol dogs and handlers, similarly armed; 81 mm mortar teams, with pre-registered coordinates all over the base for flare missions; roving machine-gun armed truck patrols; M113A1 "Track" Heavy Weapons Teams; XM706E2 "Commando" armored car Quick Reaction Forces pre positioned and on call; an H-3 "Knife" helicopter patrol, all night every night, ready to probe the jungle outside the wire with an intensely bright searchlight; AC-119 "Stinger" gunship flare missions around the perimeter whenever the intelligence guys asked for it, or in response to an alert by one of the security or K-9 posts; A-1 Skyraider fighter/bombers, AC-119 Stinger gunships, well-armed OV-10 Broncos and CH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopters that could get guns into the air as quickly as needed.

Of course, no fortress is impregnable, and more than one night we had reason to briefly wonder if the bad guys were finally tired of letting our base exist. I guess we discouraged most attempts by passing the occasional tests of our preparedness when the electronic alarms were set off, one of the K-9s alerted, or somebody heard gunfire on the perimeter. We greeted all these events with fast and aggressive response, and we were lucky while I was there. I know some weren't so lucky when NKP was hit later in the war, and I salute those who had to fight to defend NKP, as well as all our Absent Companions.

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Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 13 Dec 2010

Updated:

Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.