

Det 1 Report, yearbook supplement for the people who fly
and support the C-130E Hercules aircraft of the 374th TAW
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Hot Day At Kontum

KONTUM, Republic of Vietnam (7AF) – On Sunday morning, April 23, it was hot at Kontum airport. It got hotter.

The night before, members of a Combat Control Team and a mobility loading team of aerial port had arrived to speed the arrival and departure of C-130's flying into and out of the airport. That morning it was 90 degrees on the ramp. The men sweated as they moved quickly and efficiently to unload and load aircraft.

Then suddenly, as if the sun didn't provide heat enough, the enemy poured in several rounds. The explosions ripped through the air, overwhelming the whine of aircraft engines and other machinery. Life stood still a split second, then C-130's which had their engines running as they were being loaded, were quickly filled and sped down the runway into the air.

The ramp, once congested with human traffic shuttling supplies and troops to and from the C-130's, was left populated with only trucks, forklifts, loaded pallets, and one small puppy.

Everyone, including the Army of the Republic of Vietnam soldier who owned the dog, was hiding in the bunkers along the ramp. Combat Controllers stayed on the air long enough to broadcast to all aircraft in the area "Kontum is closed, we are under attack."

Then it was unearthly quite.

As minutes passed and no more rounds hit, men began to creep out of the bunkers and twenty minutes later life was nearly normal again as a C-130 shuttle bird landed.

The only concession to the enemy was that the Air Force men working on the ramp were wearing flak jackets. It also was not unusual to find the aircrafts navigator at the back of the Hercules to expedite loading.

Fatigue etched across the faces of Combat Controllers Sergeants Brian Sawyer and Bill Lacer. Sweat soaked through their heavy flak jackets. The soggy wet bodies of loading crews were caked with grime kicked back by the heated exhaust of C-130s engines.

Despite the heat, fatigue, and enemy shelling, a steady stream of trucks, artillery pieces, ambulances, jeeps, bull dozers, and all the paraphernalia of war was moved on and off the aircraft.

It was Sunday. It was hot. But to the men working at Kontum airport that day, it was just another day to get a job done.



Left; A Combat Controller records another sortie on his log.