

The VCSJC Editor has made only slight grammatical corrections to ensure understanding, but has not changed the meaning of his text.

## **FAREWELL TO TONG LE CHAN OUTPOST**

After huge losses, the North Vietnamese Armed Forces attacked hundreds of South Vietnamese cities in the summer of 1972. The Vietnamese people called this the “Red Fire Summer”. The Armed Forces of South Vietnam recaptured the big cities and won the four biggest battles at Quang Tri, Kontum, Binh Dinh, and An Loc. An Loc was a big battle and the whole city collapsed.

The Vietcong’s biggest loss was at An Loc. They withdrew back into the jungle, waiting for re enforcement for future battles and to rest. They encircled the Tong le Chan outpost 20 miles southwest of An Loc. Tong Le Chan was also called Tong Le Chan by the Vietnamese.

Tong Le Chan was a U.S. Special Forces camp (A-334) before the 92nd ARVN (Army, Republic of Vietnam) Ranger battalion took over. The Vietcong surrounded Tong Le Chan with over 250 fighting men, but they didn’t overrun it. They set a trap we called “Steel Bird Hunting” with a lot of mortars and cannons deployed to devastate South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) support.

The Tong Le Chan outpost was a very important Vietcong checkpoint. The South Vietnamese government was determined to keep Tong Le Chan at any price to keep the Vietcong out of War Zone III and Saigon.

The roads to bring supplies to support Tong Le Chan were cut off and dangerous. Only the air support of our two 429th and 431st C-7A Caribou squadrons stationed at Tan Son Nhut AB supplied Tong Le Chan. For many months, support of Tong Le Chan was very difficult with Vietcong forces nearby. No C-7A Caribous could safely land for resupply.

In April 1973, the crew of Captain Ut, our 431st Squadron Safety Officer, flew in and tested the Vietcong skill by his method of “quickly touch and go” to check how the Vietcong “Steel Bird Hunters” reacted. They hit the Tong Le Chan airfield with a dozen mortars. Captain Ut’s crew took off safely and escaped from the extremely dangerous airfield.

The ARVN 92nd Ranger Battalion was terribly short of supplies, without food, medicines, or evacuation of the wounded. The 429th and 431st squadrons few daily airdrop missions to Tong Le Chan, but no one could land safely to provide support.