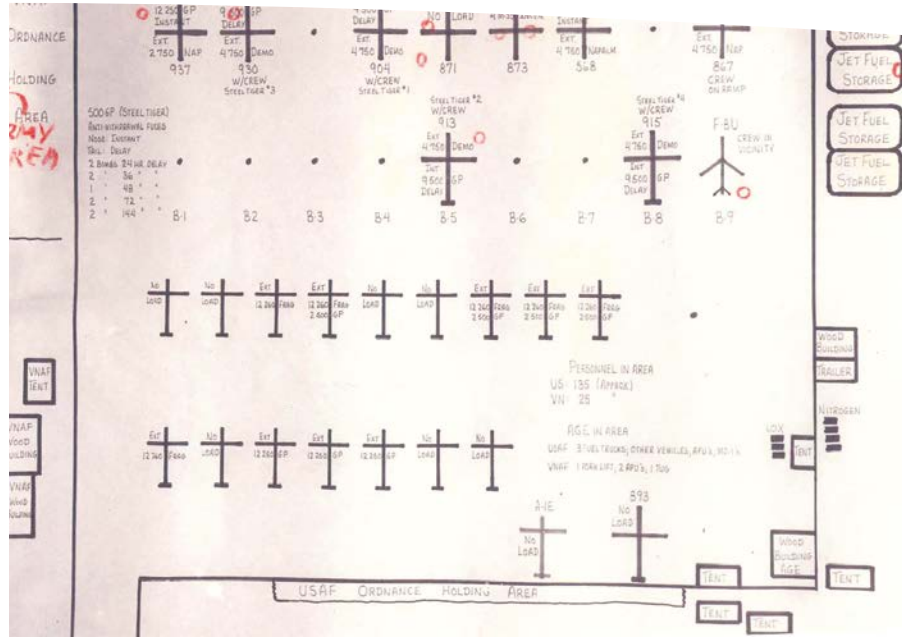


# Biên Hòa Air Base, Vietnam – 16 May 1965



In response to an increase in bombing commitments in North Vietnam, the United States Air Force B-57 mission located at the Biên Hòa Air Base increased to the point that it became an around-the-clock commitment.

This led the weapons storage facility to deliver munitions well ahead of orders, with bombs stored underneath the wings of the B-57s awaiting orders to load. The munitions consisted of 250 lb, 500 lb and 750 lb general purpose bombs, many armed with time-delay fuses.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> May 1965, while waiting to take off, a B-57 exploded on the ground at Biên Hòa Air Base. Due to the operational tempo, the aircraft and the ammunition had been stored too close together, allowing the fires and explosions to propagate between aircraft and their prepositioned bombs. The explosions ignited five 200,000 l bladders of JP-4 jet fuel and a quantity of napalm which further added to the inferno.

The cause of the accident is unknown. One potential cause is the failure of a B-57 starter turbine, actuated by a black powder cartridge, which may have flown loose from the starter housing and hit the fuse of an armed 500 lb bomb.

By the time the explosions and the fire finally ceased, 10 B-57s, one Navy F-8 Crusader and 15 A-1Es were destroyed plus the equipment of several ground support units.

The subsequent investigation recommended improvements which led to a major program to construct revetments and aircraft shelters to protect aircraft and other valuable assets during similar events in the future.



**28 Fatalities**

**105 Injuries**

**Unknown Damages**