

RICHARD HUNT

CLASS 1-61

is honored on Panel 47W, Row 9 of
the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Full Name: RICHARD HUNT
Wall Name: RICHARD HUNT
Date of Birth: 3/8/1936
Date of Casualty: 8/20/1968
Home of Record: ARLINGTON
State: TX
Branch of Service: ARMY
Rank: MAJ
Casualty Country: SOUTH VIETNAM
Casualty Province: PLEIKU



Major Hunt was serving as a member of Advisory Team 24, Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) when he lost his life. He began his tour of duty in Vietnam on May 15, 1968. He had served his country for 8 years at the time of his death.



From a letter written to Mrs. Richard Hunt from Colonel James F. Cahill, Senior Advisor 24th Special Tactical Zone shortly after the death of Major Richard Hunt

“For three days, two of the Highland Scout Companies (from the 24th Special Tactical Zone) had been cut off from friendly forces. They were under constant enemy attack and bad weather in the mountains just south of Kontum City precluded rescue operations. About 2500 hours on 20 August, the Scout Companies indicated that the weather had turned favorable and that helicopters could get into their positions. It was clearly evident to myself and the Commanding Officer of the 24th Special Tactical Zone that the extraction of these 200 Vietnamese soldiers was going to be a very difficult one. Your husband volunteered to go with me to a nearby Vietnamese Battalion Command Post to supervise the heliborne operations. Eleven helicopters and eight gun ships were to be used in the extraction. While Dick and I were on the hill coordinating the helicopter operations, the enemy launched an attack on our position. Your husband was killed instantly in the attack. Major Tai, Chief of Staff, 24th Special Tactical Zone, was also wounded during the enemy attack. They were both immediately evacuated by helicopter to the 71st Evacuation Hospital in Pleiku. Your husband was pronounced dead on arrival by the doctor in attendance.

Dick was my G-3 Advisor and in charge of all operations in the 24th Special Tactical Zone. In this position, he acted as a staff advisor to the Vietnamese Army units and coordinated all U. S. assistance to the Vietnamese. During the past month he had been directing several Regimental size operations in the Kontum-Pleiku area. Your husband was a very dedicated and brave officer who spent long hours insuring that every possible effort was being made by both American and ARVN units in the area to defeat the enemy force that has been threatening Kontum. He was respected and loved by both Vietnamese and American soldiers. This feeling was attested to by the large attendance at the Memorial Service conducted by Chaplain (Captain) Thomas Baker, in Kontum City at 1430 hours on 24 August 1968. In addition to the many Vietnamese and American officers present, Major General Charles Stone, Commanding General, 4th U.S. Infantry Division was present. The General had observed Dick on many occasions in the field and greatly admired his spirit and courage.”

I AM PROUD TO SAY I KNEW AND SERVED WITH HIM

I was with Major Hunt on August 20, 1968 when fate dealt him the cruelest blow of all. What a terrible waste. He was an outstanding man and officer and I am proud to say I knew and served with him.
God bless his family.

Posted by: Chuck Schwiderski
October 1, 2000

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS
SPECIAL TACTICAL ZONE 24
APO 96499

26 Aug 68

The following News Release was prepared by the II Corps Information Office and released to all U.S. News Media in Vietnam:

“Ia Tower Valley, Vietnam (MACV 10, 22 Aug.)—Elements of the Vietnamese Army (ARVN) 24th Special Tactical Zone today entered the fifth day of heavy combat in a rugged mountainous area between Pleiku and Kontum cities.

ARVN forces in the multi-battalion Operation Binh Tay have tackled what the senior advisor, Colonel James P. Cahill, feels is a reinforced regiment of North Vietnamese regulars—probably five battalions. U.S. advisors have confirmed at least 87 NVA killed as of yesterday afternoon.

The battle centers around a jungle-covered ridge called Chi Ro Bu which rises to elevations above 3,700 feet, looming more than half a mile above the lush, green Ia Tower Valley to the north where ARVN brought government control to a population which the enemy had ruled for two years.

The battle was triggered by a sequence of events dating into early July in which 24th Zone troops swept areas for 40 kilometers (25 miles) north and northeast of Kontum City to eliminate the enemy threat of attack by the 24th NVA Regiment.

In early July, ARVN moved into a secret enemy base area called “Kon Gum” capturing literally bushels of documents, and then into the Dak Akoi river valley northeast of the city. Their intent was two-fold: either to force the 24th Regiment from that area or to make them stand and fight.

Little contact resulted, and the 24th apparently retreated south into the Ia Tower area east of Highway 14 and just south of the Pleiku-Kontum Province border.

Meanwhile, intelligence reports began to indicate a so-called “Third Offensive” would take place in middle or late August. With ARVN having cleared areas to the north and east, and U.S. forces securing to the west, the most imminent threat to Kontum seemed to be from the south.

ARVN forces led by Colonel Nguyen Ba Lien, 24th Zone commander, then set out to tip the enemy’s hand, and what Col. Lien describes as “the toughest battle I have ever fought” developed rapidly.

Fourteen companies were dispatched into this valley for cordon and search operations centering on half a dozen Montagnard villages which had been under enemy control for two years. The results of the effort, begun on August 13, were unique.

Rather than watching the usual entertainment provided by Vietnamese psychological operations teams, the Montagnard villagers insisted on providing their own entertainment for the government forces liberating their villages.

On the first day, 34 volunteers from one village came forward to form a Popular Forces platoon to defend their homes. Government control of the Ia Tower Valley, it seemed, was very welcome. Village elders invited province officials to rice wine ceremonies; music and dancing were included.

But the enemy was not so pleased—friendly cordon elements on the south side of the valley began taking fire from a hill called Chi Pou. So ARVN and Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) units began to sweep south into the mountains. Driving past Chi Pou toward the Chi Ro Bu ridge, they found fresh trails cut through the jungle toward the west.

CIDG soldiers followed these trails across Highway 14 and made contact with the enemy. It was reasoned that enemy forces must occupy the areas at the east end of the trails also, so 24th Zone Scout elements were sent to reconnoiter.

The Scouts made contact as they tried to ascend Chi Ro Bu on Sunday, and by nightfall the enemy fire had become so intense that retreat was impossible.

ARVN then moved in from Highway 14 with a multi-battalion relief force, which was able to get within 500 yards of the Scouts before being pinned down by fire from Hill 881 about 2 miles southwest of Chi Ro Bu. Intense fighting developed until Wednesday afternoon.

So tough was the NVA resistance that no reinforcements could be brought in to the beleaguered Scout units. Not until midnight Tuesday could helicopters get in to evacuate casualties. Supplies were airdropped; ammunition was kicked out of helicopters as they sped over Scout's positions.

U.S. helicopter pilots reported enemy dead were lying "all over the place"—some as close as 15 meters to the mortar-packed Scout unit perimeters. ARVN finally broke through to the Scouts late yesterday afternoon, and friendly forces, still under heavy fire, managed to pull back.

ARVN artillery batteries have pounded the NVA-held heights from their firebase about 4 ½ miles north of the contact area, throwing literally thousands of 105mm and 155mm shells into the enemy positions. Big 8-inch howitzers and 175mm cannon from U.S. bases as far away as Pleiku and Kontum have blasted the area with hundreds of rounds.

Yesterday, the ARVN disengaged to allow high-flying B-52 Stratofortress bombers to come in and rain hundreds of tons of high-explosive bombs on the area.

ARVN is back in the Chi Ro Bu region today, with hopes of wresting control of the strategic enemy base area from the determined NVA.

Col. Cahill expects the enemy body count from the week's action to mount past 300. What finally develops will be reported as soon as possible."

More from Charles Schwiderski

Sorry but I was with Major Hunt when he was killed. He wasn't hit by enemy fire but instead by fire from an American helicopter gun ship passing overhead that strafed our position. They had been working for another unit on a neighboring ridgeline and must have lost their bearings. Major Hunt died in my arms as I tried to help him.

Charles Schwiderski
Feb 27, 2011

The battle took place on a mountain called "Chi Ro Bu" in the mountains between Kontum and Pleiku. Sadly, for some reason, I did not go out with the Scouts. I was never able to find out why not but I suspect Col. Cahill had something to do with it. He treated me like he was my grandfather. Anyway the battle was going on and LTC Peel, the Deputy SA, came to me and told me to get ready to go out. We choppered into the location of the HQ for a battalion of the 42d ARVN Regiment that was involved in the battle. This battalion was trying to reach the surrounded Scouts. Col Peel and I were at this location for 4 days. We received very limited enemy fire. On one particular day, a chopper carrying Col Cahill, his driver Frank Burton, Major Hunt and the ARVN Major you mentioned. They were having a meeting with the battalion CO and his advisors. I was listening and this feeling that something was wrong came over me and I moved to my foxhole. Within a minute two or three gunships flew over and strafed our position, Major Hunt was hit in the chest and the ARVN Major was hit in the hand. When I went to aid Major Hunt the ARVN Major was waving his hand in my face (I could see right through it) begging for a dust off. I got to Major Hunt and he was trying to say something to me. I bent down to hear better but it was just garble. His hands grabbed the lapels of the uniform shirt and his fingers had to be pried off me. There was nothing I or anyone else could do. The ARVN made a stretcher from a poncho and tree limbs and moved Major Hunt to the waiting helicopter. As they were lifting him into the helicopter the stretcher fell apart and Major Hunt fell to the ground. It was terrible. The rest you know. There was a big investigation conducted by the gunship unit. I myself was questioned but knowing what Col Cahill wanted, I just said I was buried in my foxhole and didn't see anything. I will never forget the casings falling like rain as the gunships flew over. Supposedly there was a unit of the US 4th Division on a neighboring ridgeline also involved in the battle. They had the gunships firing support for them and the pilots got disoriented and came up our ridgeline.

I wish Major Hunt had been hit by enemy fire but sadly, that did not happen.

Charles Schwiderski
Feb 28, 2011