

THE 1972 BATTLE OF KONTUM REUNION

Jack Heslin and Jim Stein

After 36 years, MACV Team 33 held its first reunion. The reunion was held on the weekend of 18 – 21 April 2008 in Denver CO. The event came about as a result of team members making contact through the Battle of Kontum web site authored and hosted by Jack Heslin - www.thebattleofkontum.com. The reunion was organized by MACV advisors Jack Finch and Ray Hall. Two VHPA members were also present for the reunion, Jim Stein and Jack Heslin. MACV Team 33 supported the 23rd ARVN Division during the Battle of Kontum which was part of the spring offensive of 1972. The battle was one of the largest battles of the Vietnam War and resulted in three NVA divisions being defeated at the City of Kontum in the Central Highlands. The battle was considered pivotal in the successful defense of the Highlands. During the battle more than 6,000 ARVN soldiers died and an estimated 18,000 NVA soldiers were killed. Reunion attendees brought "Show and Tell" items such as maps and photos. Jack Heslin brought copies

of taped interviews of the advisors made during the battle back in June 1972. Many of the advisors were able to hear their own taped interviews for the first time.

The reunion was very successful by any measure - Team members and guests had an opportunity to share stories and share memories from the 1972 Battle of Kontum. The exchange of memories between the aviators and the MACV Advisors was very meaningful and for the first time, we were able to meet face to face after 36 years. The presence of Gen Ly Tong Ba the 23rd ARVN Commander and his Division Surgeon, Doctor Giap Phuc Hai added a great deal to the reunion. Many of the participants wanted an opportunity to meet other pilots who flew in the battle. A suggestion was made that the group may come to a future VHPA reunion so that they would have an opportunity to meet some of the pilots who supported them. An additional page was added to the "Battle of Kontum" web site that provides comments and pictures from the reunion, all are welcome to visit the

site. Those who participated in the reunion are listed here: Gen Ly Tong Ba, CG 23rd ARVN Div, Doctor Giap Phuc Hai, Medical Doctor, 23rd ARVN Div. Jack Truby, Senior Advisor, J.W. "Bill" Bricker, Deputy Senior Advisor, Jack "Spook" Finch G-3 Air Advisor, Richard C. Gudat, G4 Advisor, Ray Hall, Signal Advisor, Thomas P. McKenna, Senior Advisor, 44th Regiment, Wade B. Lovings, Deputy Advisor, 44th Regiment, Stephen "Mark" Truhan, Ranger Advisor, Ben Het, Jim Stein, Scout Pilot B/H Troop 7/17th Air Cav and Jack Heslin, S-3 52nd CAB / Asst. S-3 17th CAG.

The 17th Combat Aviation Group provided most of the Army aviation support during the battle. The units listed below reflect the 17th CAG in May of 1972: 57th AHC Gladiators, 180th ASHC Big Windy, 361st AWC Pink Panthers, 604th Transportation Company, Security Detachment, Hawks Claw – Abn TOW 2 NUH-1B (arrived in Pleiku April 29th), H Troop (Air) 7/17th CAV (Provisional), H Troop (Air) 10th Cav (-) (Provisional)



TOP Row left to right: Jack Finch, Doctor Giap Phuc Hai, Gen Ly Tong Ba, Mark Truhan, Jack Heslin, Bill Bricker, Ray Hall

BOTTOM Row left to right: Richard Gudat, Jim Stein, Tom McKenna, Jack Truby

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