

**Nemo's War Dog Heroes Memorial  
Dedication  
Lackland AFB, Texas  
November 15, 2005**

**Good Morning! On behalf of all of the Military Working Dog handlers, both past and present, thank you for this opportunity to dedicate the "Nemo's War Dog Heroes" Memorial project currently underway here at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, TX.**

**I'd like to take a brief moment to introduce the members of the committee who are here today:**

<b>Terry Strickland</b>	<b>Bien Hoa (3<sup>rd</sup> SPS) – 67-68 – Vietnam (King) Korat RTAB (388<sup>th</sup> SPS) – 68-69 - Thailand (Mr. Misty X851)</b>
<b>Kelly Bateman</b>	<b>Ubon RTAB (8<sup>th</sup> SPS) – 70-71 – Thailand (Baron 279M)</b>
<b>Ernest Childers</b>	<b>Udorn RTAB (432<sup>nd</sup> SPS) – 70-71 – (Duke X093)</b>
<b>Jimmy Thornton</b>	<b>Phan Rang (35<sup>th</sup> SPS) – 68-69 – Vietnam (Gunner 2B29) Udorn (432<sup>nd</sup> SPS) – 73-74 – Major (85X8),</b>
<b>I am Bill Cummings</b>	<b>U-Tapao RTAB (635<sup>th</sup> SPS) – 70-71 (Brutus X321)</b>

**I'd also like to introduce our Honor Guard for today's ceremony, SrA Christina Marth and MWD Hhart (H008) and SSgt Vilani Bio and MWD Amber (F608) of the 37<sup>th</sup> SFS Military Working Dog Section.**

**Let me take you back in time for just a moment**

**Predawn hours of December 4, 1966**

**Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam was attacked by a large force of Viet Cong commandos. The Air Base was hit by approximately 60 mortars. The size of the Viet Cong infiltration force was believed to have been over 75 saboteurs.**

**Once inside the base, the enemy divided into smaller groups to attack their targets. Several sentry dog teams stationed on perimeter posts gave the initial alert and warning almost simultaneously. This early warning enabled security forces of the 377<sup>th</sup> Air Police Squadron to successfully repel the attack, minimizing damage to aircraft and facilities.**

**Although wounded, one dog handler continued to engage the enemy, while notifying Central Security Control (CSC) of their location and direction of travel.**

**Two security policemen of the 377<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron, positioned in a machine gun bunker, were at the ready as the VC approached the main aircraft-parking ramp. In a short period of time they repelled the enemy, killing thirteen of the attackers. Security forces rapidly deployed around the perimeter and prevented numerous infiltrators from escaping; forcing them to seek refuge in a Vietnamese graveyard, dense vegetation and community wells. Search patrols believed that all-remaining VC were killed or captured the following morning.**

**During the initial assault, one handler (A2C George M. Bevich, Jr.) and three sentry dogs were killed. Sentry Dog Rebel, who first detected a group of approximately 75 VC less than 100 yards away, was the first to be killed by automatic weapon fire.**

**At an adjacent post, Sentry Dog Cubby, alerted and was killed by gunfire.**

**Another sentry dog, Toby, also alerted as the infiltrators advanced, and was killed by gunfire. The attack had been thwarted and now it was time to secure the base as daylight approached.**

**Unfortunately, K9 teams were not included in those daylight patrols. Just before total darkness on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1966 after Sentry Nemo and his handler were posted, Nemo alerted and was released to attack the VC who had evaded earlier detection. Nemo and his handler were both wounded, but not before killing two VC. Nemo's injuries included the loss of one eye and a gunshot wound that ripped into his nose.**

**A sweep of the area by the Quick Response Team (QRT) met with negative results.**

**Using additional sentry dog teams, the security forces located and killed four more VC.**

**A second sweep with the dog teams resulted in the discovery of four additional VC who were hiding underground. The remaining enemy forces were soon killed by other security police.**

**Before help could arrive, Nemo, an 85 pound German shepherd, although severely wounded, protected his handler by crawling across his body, and guarding him against anyone who dared to come near. When help arrived, they were able to convince Nemo to leave his handler, who was then given first aid. Nemo, suffering from a gunshot wound to his face, and the loss of his right eye, was relieved of sentry dog duties.**

**The 377th SPS was awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for its "heroic valor," against the Viet Cong infiltration force.**

### **Nemo's service to his country did not end**

**Nemo has been credited with saving his handler's life and preventing further destruction of life and property at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. On 23 June 1967, Headquarters, USAF, directed that Nemo be returned to the United States as the first sentry dog officially retired from active service. The C-124 Globemaster, carrying TSN hero Nemo, touched down at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas, on July 22, 1967. Nemo was now home!**

**His permanent retirement kennel was located at the Department of Defense Dog Center, Lackland AFB, Texas. Sentry Dog Nemo was one of the few Military Working Dogs that returned home.**

**Nemo spent his retirement years at the Department of Defense Dog Center, Lackland AFB, Texas. He was assigned a permanent kennel near the veterinary facility, exactly where we are standing today. A sign with his name, serial number, and details of his heroic exploits designated his freshly painted home. Nemo's presence at Lackland reminded students just how important a dog is to his handler and to the defense of our military installations.**

**Nemo was frequently taken on tours throughout the United States to assist in the procurement of military working dogs. The military used Nemo as a Department of Defense canine recruiter. He made several television appearances and helped maintain an adequate supply of working dogs for all the armed services.**

**Sentry Dog Nemo died in December of 1972 at Lackland AFB shortly before the Christmas holiday. The Vietnam War Hero was laid to rest on March 15, 1973 at the DoD Dog Center at the age of 11.**

**In due course, the United States began to pull their armed forces from Vietnam. But, there would be no homecoming or parades for our canine partners. Military regulations prohibited the return of these heroes to the United States. It was against military policy for war dogs to re-enter civilian life after they had served in combat. It was also declared that our dogs were military equipment, thus classifying them as expendable.**

**Our dogs that had so valiantly served our country and survived were abandoned in Vietnam and Thailand. Many were given to the ARVN or Thailand military who already had an excess of dogs. No one truly knows what happened to these heroes.**

**The government recruited over 4,000 dogs and we believe that less than 200 made it home. It was estimated that these dogs saved the lives of over 10,000 American soldiers. Service to their country was rewarded with exile and perhaps even death. The fate of many of the dogs remains unaccounted for and unknown to this day. Many of our dogs were simply abandoned by the military. It is the goal, with this dedication, that this will never happen again. With a new emphasis placed on the value of our Military Working dogs of today, we have been assured by our Military this will never happen again.**

**Currently, the only memorials that exist today in our country to honor these canine warriors have been established by private funding.**

### **We are about to change this situation!**

**During the 2003 VSPA reunion in San Antonio, a group of “Old Dawg Handlers” toured the 37<sup>th</sup> SFS kennel at the DoD Military Working Dog School. Many of us had received our Sentry & Patrol Dog training at this very spot.**

**During the tour, we noticed an old cracked cement pad with a crumbling raised border around the perimeter. We found our selves looking at the remnants of where a Sentry Dog, named Nemo, had been retired after receiving wounds in a 1966 attack on Tan Son Nhut AB, Vietnam. The pad was barren, with no markings indicating why it was there. I can’t begin to tell you the thoughts of our handlers when we realized that this was sacred ground – the resting place of Sentry Dog Nemo!**

**Once again,  
Members of the Vietnam Security Police Association (VSPA) and the Vietnam  
Dog Handler Association (VDHA) were on point!**

**This kennel pad was originally the permanent kennel of one of our heroes – Sentry Dog Nemo – A534. A sign with Nemo’s name, serial number, and details of his heroic exploits designated his freshly painted home in 1967. The site was now unrecognizable and in shambles.**

**A group of veteran K-9 Veterans was formed and plans were put in motion to explore the site and to make sure that the history of this hero would be told – changes had to be made to tell the story of Nemo (A534), accurately and completely.**

**Between October of 2003 and the summer of 2005, this group, now operating under the name of “Nemo’s War Dog Heroes” was formed and we are now telling the story of Nemo.**

**On September 23, 2005, several of the veteran dog handlers who had visited the site during the VSPA reunion in 2003, were invited to attend a graduation ceremony of a new type of MWD to be used world wide, the Specialized Search Dogs (SSD). We would like to extend a special thank you to U. S. Marine Corps Sergeant Chris Willingham, Mr. Orlando Nunez, and the members of SSD Class II for their partnership in this project. This class of today's MWD handlers had joined with us to dedicate a headstone at Nemo's pad. With the installment of the headstone, the groundwork has been laid for the old and new Military Working Dog Handlers to embark on restoring this sacred ground to honor all of the canine heroes throughout history with the completion of this memorial project. Our intention is to restore the kennel to the condition circa 1967-1968, using photographs of its original condition. A replica of Nemo's kennel house, and the sign honoring Nemo, along with the kennel fencing has been reproduced as close to the original compound as possible.**

**Today's handlers, along side the veteran handlers of years past, have put their foot in the door, so to speak, with their efforts and hopefully the project can be completed with the help of other veteran's groups and friends.**

**We would like to thank everyone, especially our current military counterparts; the members of the 377<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron, Tan Son Nhut, especially the veteran Military Working Dog handlers, Lt. Colonel Robert Roth of the 37<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron, Lt. Thomas McGillicuddy and the students of the 341<sup>st</sup> Training Squadron, Ms. Barbara Stadts, and our special guest - Vietnam Security Police Association President, Steve Gattis, for all of their efforts to make this dedication possible. This is a very proud and historic moment for all of us.**

**Let's never forget our partners, those heroic canines both past and present, for their gallant service to our country, both at home and places so very far away. You have made us very proud to have been on the end of your leash, now and forever.**

**To Nemo and all of the Work Dog heroes – we salute you for your service in the name of freedom.**

**Today, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005, we officially dedicate this hollowed ground as the “Nemo's War Dog Heroes” Memorial at Lackland, Air Force Base. The legacy will continue as we honor all of canine heroes, past, present and future.**

**On behalf of all “Dog Handlers” from all of the United States services, we are honored to be part of this great military tradition and we will always be in debt to the service of our counterpart canine heroes.**

**Thank you so much for allowing us to be a part of this historic event. We will never be able to express our gratitude for allowing us to be a part of this project.**

**In conclusion, let us never forget our War Dog Heroes.**

**Nemo's War Dog Heroes Financial Support Address**

**Should you wish to assist financially, donations to the Nemo's War Dog Heroes Memorial may be sent to:**

**NWDHM - Bill Cummings  
10172 N. Tall Cotton Dr.  
Marana, AZ 85653-7917**

**Checks should be made payable to NWDHM. All funds will be used in the continuing effort of education and support of the memorial for Military Working Dogs past, present and future. Thank you in advance for your support of this project.**