

## Operation Linebacker II Memorial dedication slated for Dec. 8

Written by Sean Green  
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The Eighth Air Force Museum Association will have a memorial monument dedication honoring the 40th anniversary of Linebacker II Dec. 8 at the Eighth Air Force Museum Air Park, Barksdale Air Force Base. A reception in the museum will immediately follow. This is free to the public and dress is Business.

Dec. 18, 2012 will mark the 40th anniversary of Operation Linebacker II when airmen wrote the final chapter in the Vietnam War.

“After eleven nights of sustained heavy bombardment, the North Vietnamese were out of SAM missiles and their air defense system was in shambles,” said Terry Snook, President of the Eighth Air Force Museum Association, “They signaled that they wished to return to the peace talks in Paris; 29 days later on Jan. 27, 1973 a cease fire agreement was signed, ending the Vietnam War and two and a half weeks later 591 POWs held by the North Vietnamese were released from captivity.”

B-52D and 56-0629 at the Eighth Air Force museum flew as Black-03 on the night of Dec. 26, 1972. It was one of the nine bombers that received SAM battle damage during Linebacker II that was able to return to a recovery base.

The 15 B-52s that were downed by the North Vietnamese are listed on the side panels of this monument. The crew members names, position and ranks at the time of their loss of their aircraft are listed. Many were carried as missing in action for years before their status was changed to killed in action.

Beginning in early October and through mid-December of 1972, United States National Security Advisor Dr. Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese Politburo Member Le Duc Tho met in Paris to discuss proposals for a Peace Settlement that would end the decade old Vietnam War. Those peace talks effectively broke down on Dec. 13. Kissinger sent a message to the North Vietnamese warning of “Grave Consequences” if the talks did not resume within 72 hours. That same day, President Richard Nixon ordered the planning of a “Maximum Effort” bombing campaign that could be executed within 72 hours.

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On Dec. 18, with no response from the North Vietnamese government, Operation Linebacker II commenced with nightly bombing in and around Hanoi, Haiphong and other military and industrial targets in North Vietnam. Over the next eleven nights, B-52Ds and B-52Gs from U-Tapao Royal Thai Navy Base in Thailand and Andersen Air Force Base Guam flew a total of 729 combat sorties against military and industrial targets in North Vietnam. Surface to Air Missiles (SAMs), Anti-Aircraft Artillery and Mig-21 Fighters were deployed defensively by the North Vietnamese against these B-52s and their support aircraft.

Estimates of as many as 1,240 SAM firings resulted in 24 B-52s being hit, and 15 of those 24 being downed, 10 of which came down within the boundaries of North Vietnam. Air Force and Navy tactical aircraft flying in support of the B-52 strikes lost an additional 11 aircraft during Linebacker II.

For more information call the Museum Gift Shop at 318-752-0055.