

Ban Me Thuot Air Field, Camp Coryell
Photo Journal

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1969-1970

TUY, 31st SPS; BMT, 31st SPS, TDY DET 9, 619 TCS

Ban Me Thuot, 1969-1970: I was USAF Security Police, one of eight or so, assigned to Det 9, 619 Tactical Control Squadron, TDY from Tuy Hòa Air Base from Oct through Dec 69. Our compound, with about 50 to 70 personnel, was about half way down the runway next to where the Pterodactyl O-2s were parked. I spent my whole time there either in the gun emplacement on top of the concrete radar tower or in one of the gun emplacements in the corners of the compound. From the tower looking toward the Plantation there were gunships parked in revetments between our compound and the fence. To the left was the MP K-9 kennel and the PA&E Compound.

On the night of 10 Nov 1969, I had a spectacular view from the tower, the highest point on Camp Coryell, as 25 or so mortar and RPG impacted in PA&E and seemingly everywhere. I heard reports of sappers that night and there were reports circulating on our radio net that they were seen on the runway.

We saw an RPG leave a launcher out in the plantation 150 meters or so out, and watched it fly straight at us. It passed the top of our tower thirty feet out at eye level and impacted at our compound's back gate. It freaks me out to this day. I can't imagine how all the choppers guys handled all the action you saw. They sure have MY respect! I have an audio recording of the action that night including radio traffic of several different radio nets if anyone is interested.

Any other USAF folks out there? I am in contact with three other Security Policeman that served there: Gary Hacker, Tom Sapio, and Dale Burkleo. Merry Christmas to all who served at Camp Coryell.

[Ken de Russy](#)



1) Arrival at Ban Me Thuot Air Field: I volunteered for Vietnam and arrived at Tuy Hòa Air Base in late June 1969. About 25 miles away was the provenance capital, central highlands, Ban Me Thuot, not far from the Cambodian border.

2) Ken de Russy in SP Tower.

The Tower, and that is all I considered it but you guys might well refer to it for what was contained within. All I saw it as was an Observation Post and an important one since it was the tallest OP on Camp Coryell from the road that passed the Det 9 compound on the north side.

The sandbagged position contained a .50 caliber machine gun, a recoilless rifle, starlight scope, flares, radios and other sundry items. It was manned by an SP and if we were hit a second SP was added. There was someone else that served as a liaison when we got hit and

operated a radio on another non-SP net. The second photo in the image with the fuel truck driving by is looking almost due north and the 155 area is visible on the left.



3) Camp Coryell, Detachment-9. Home of the 155 (AHC) Aviation Helicopter CO: gunships and slicks. Within that area was a detachment 9/619th Tactical Control Squadron, USAF (maintained separation in flying aircraft and artillery).



4) Camp Coryell. Red dust blowing everywhere!

5) Chi Com mortar fins and detonator, dug out of the ground.



6) Det-9, across the runway





7) Above: Cobra Gunships.

8) Detachment-9.



9) Det-9.



10) Downtown Ban Me Thuot.



11) Peter Biasi, Dec. Cook, 19

12) Senator Barry Goldwater vists Det-9, MARS radio station.



13) Senator Barry Goldwater vists Det-9, MARS radio station.

[If Senator Goldwater had won the presidency... would we have won too?]



14) MAC-V, Vietnam.



15) Mortar damage. Top Left: That is an inert 122 Rocket I am standing next to. They were rather large especially when compared to a 81MM mortar!



15) Ken de Russy: SP Tech School graduate, Lackland AFB, Texas, 1968.
(Ain't I purtty!)

16) SPS Det-9.



Fire Destroys MACV Lodge

SAIGON (AP) — A former imperial hunting lodge housing the U.S. military and civil operations headquarters in Ban Me Thuot, capital of the central highlands, was leveled by fire Friday.

The huge two-story teakwood structure dated back to the mid-1950s, one of several hunting lodges built at one time or another for Bao Dai, during and after his reign as Vietnam's last emperor.

Since the early part of the war, it has been used as quarters and offices for the U.S. Military Assistance Command (MACV) headquarters at Ban Me Thuot.

About 200 Americans are based at Ban Me Thuot, most of them in and around the former lodge, but no casualties were reported in the fire, official sources said. Cause of the fire was unknown.

6 Pacific Stars & Stripes
Sunday, Dec. 21, 1969

17) Left, News article: Pacific Stars & Stripes.

18) Photos Right: Road outside the south perimeter.

Middle Right: Shot up Esso station that was kind of shocking to see. Right to the left of that image there is a crew of Vietnamese workers rebuilding the perimeter fence that was shot up in previous action. Fence repair crews had plenty of work as the perimeter gunners usually just opened up when the first round came in. Of course they took no care to avoid the fences! I suppose there was a logic to it as the VC used prelocated positions that were just outside the fence line.

I remember stories of patrols finding the actual places where the base plates had made an impression in the ground. In fact the routine was that they would fire some number of rounds and then relocate to another prelocated position so as give us less chance to zero in on their location.

Lower Right: *Get that camera outta' my face!*

From: Bill Lumas (WJ LUMAS)

To: Ken de Russy

Was my last night in country after 15 months. Stayed out on bunker that night because it was a safer place to be. My hootch took 3 hits. Have photos of the damage and a piece of my 2nd flight hootch roof, complete with blue paint on it. My partner (crewchief) Ernie Plummer was in the hootch & got hit in the *behind*. They took him to the hospital before I could say goodbye or get his home address. Searched for him from time to time ever since. Found him last year, had great conversations. He was not well and I made arrangements to bring him to the reunion with me but his doctor said no. He died a few months ago. Sad that he past but it was wonderful to speak with him after so many years, he was a very special person.

Bill Lumas



19) Letter below. Right: Writing pad with shrapnel holes.

4/25/97

DEAR KEN:

O:O NOT GET YOUR FAX CORRECT. SENDING SOME BLACK & WHITE 155 PHOTOS BLIMP SPECS & ODDS + ENDS.

TAPE IS FROM 3 DIFFERENT ATTACKS BY 155 + RECORDING OF A FRUN.

HAVE LOTS MORE STUFF. BEST WAY IS TO GET TOGETHER & TAKE PHOTOS TO A KINKO'S FOR COLOR COPIES.

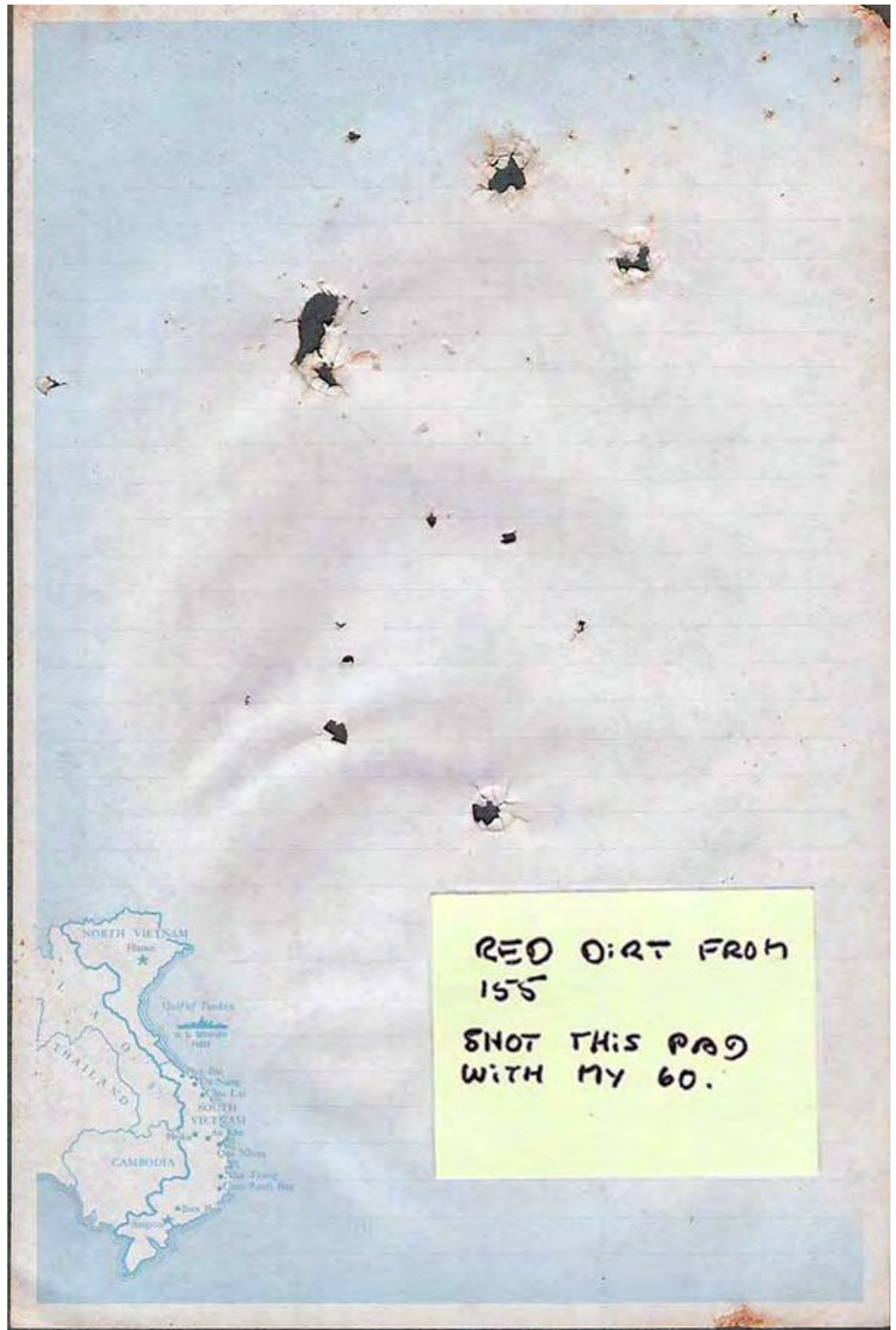
BLIMP TOURS OUT OF SANTA BARBARA WOULD BE A MONEY MAKER - KNOW ANY POTENTIAL INVESTOR / OPERATORS - BIG BUCKS FOR US!

LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU!

YES - IT REALLY DID HAPPEN - THE BAD DREAM WAS CONTINUAL HOME.

MY REAL PROBLEM WITH GALOWIN AND MULLIN IS THEIR VERSION OF THE HISTORY OF 155 IS TOO MUCH OF A TRIBUTE TO THEMSELVES & THEIR DILLUSIONS OF GRANDEUR. WE LOST THE WAR AND 1/2 OF THE 155 SURVIVORS HAVE MENTAL PROBLEMS - TO THIS DAY.

REGARDS:
Bill Luma



RED DIRT FROM
155
SHOT THIS PAD
WITH MY 60.



20) Patch: 155th Assault Helicopter Co



We Take Care of Our Own