

Vietnam Security Police Association, Inc.

BEFORE and AFTER

SID COWAN 1965-66
NCOIC SECURITY



DET 9, 619th TCS
PYRAMID
Ban Me Thuot, RVN

SID COWAN
POSTER BOY for VIAGRA
Santa Rosa, CA - 2003

Tales from Thuot #18

**Ban Me Thuot Air Field, RVN,
Home of Pyramid**

Who Were Those Masked Men?

Submitted by SSgt Sid Cowan

Prelude:

Today, 1 April, 2003, some of our Special Ops guys went in and rescued a female soldier (Jessica Lynch) being held by Iraqi forces. News of this warmed my old heart and caused me to remember a brush I had with some Special Ops people in the summer of 1966.

37 Years Earlier – Darlac Hotel, Ban Me Thuot Air Field, Vietnam

I was on duty on the noon to 4 PM shift at the Darlac gate. It was a warm, quiet afternoon and only a few of the night shift crew were stirring out of their bunks. Our CO, Major Cline and all of the officers (except maybe for one sleeper were out at the site and I was on my feet, trying to overcome the boredom.

Suddenly, the pedestrian gate opened and five or six Americans dressed in black fatigues with black boonie hats came in. Each carried a type of sub-machine gun that I had never seen before, a short, stubby thing that was matte black and carried on their backs on a sling. Later, I thought they might have been NATO weapons, perhaps from Sweden.

After they all had cleared the small gate, they sort of spread out and began looking the place over. None wore an insignia of rank or displayed any nametags or patches that might indicate their branch of service. The oldest of the group, I figured him to be the NCO, looked at me as if I might have once kicked his mother. Finally, he asked me where the bar was. I knew in my gut that these guys would be nothing but trouble and began thinking about who was up in the bar. Madame Le was not at the Darlac, but I remembered seeing her husband go up to the bar earlier. I knew that there were about three girls up there, including the Dragon Lady's niece, "Baby San". There were also a few civilian construction workers from RMKBRJ. There is no way that I wanted those men to go up to the bar, but I also knew that they wouldn't easily be put off.

I told the spokesman where the bar was and also told him that they would all have to leave their weapons at the gate if they went up, figuring that they wouldn't want to do that, and simply leave. Well, I was absolutely correct about them not wanting to part with their weapons, which remained with them as they climbed the stairs and entered the bar.

Now I am really concerned. They had disregarded my orders, but what action should I take? Obviously, I couldn't

call their unit, not knowing who the hell they were. I wasn't about to call the MP's from the Bungalow for assistance and I DAMN sure wasn't going up to the bar and tell them to leave. So, of course, I did nothing and all went well for about forty minutes. Then all hell broke loose.

The first casualty was the person of Mr. Le, tumbling, skidding and rolling down the stairs amid the sounds of shouting and things breaking. Down came the girls next. Squealing all the way as they headed for the street and safety. Suddenly, the chaos stopped as abruptly as it had started. A few minutes later the "men in black" came casually down the stairs, chatting and joking among themselves. With the older NCO in the lead, they walked by me with hardly a glance and filed back out through the narrow gate and onto the street, sucking on bottles of the foul "33" beer. I watched them walk past the movie house and around the corner and never saw them again.

I took the stairs to the bar three at a time, dreading what I might find. The American civilians were pretty well banged up, but ambulatory. A lot of furniture was smashed, one window broken and the cash drawer was missing. I found out later that "Baby San" had rescued the loot as the girls fled.

No weapons were used and nobody was seriously hurt. Thank you baby Jesus.

In the days that followed, Madame Le ranted and raved about her monetary losses and demanded of Major Cline that the Air Force pay. The unfortunate man, who was outmatched by Madame Le from day one, simply nodded and smoked his toothpick.

Special Operations, bad boys, to be sure, but I was proud of them this day, 1 April, 2003.

submitted by

**Sid Cowan, NCOIC Security
Pyramid, 1965-1966 and 1970-1971**

We Take Care of Our Own

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