

1968 Binh Thuy AB Main Gate Shoot-out

632nd SPS

by Gary Steele (RIP)
1967-1968

I would like info on this incident if anyone can help. I hope this does not sound weird but I would like to know about a shooting causing death to a QC, and the two SPs who were working the Main Gate at Binh Thuy who were held hostage at gun point for hours in the small bunker just to the side from the gate.

During Tet 1968, I was assigned to the Binh Thuy Air Base Main Gate, which was also manned by SVN QCs. At Binh Thuy, the SVN Marines had a 105 howitzer position on base.

One day, some of the SVN howitzer crew decided to go into Can Tho and party, where they met some non Binh Thuy SVN Marines, striking up a camaraderie friendship. The Binh Thuy howitzer crew decided to bring their new buddies back with them onto the base to continue the party. The rowdy marines were all stopped by the Main Gate QCs, for lack of identification, or not being part of the base gun crews.

An loud argument began between the SVN marines and the QCs, and we barely got in a radio call to CSC, and the QCs called for reinforcements. Tempers were flaring between the armed troops and the argument was getting out of hand. Additional Binh Thuy QCs were responding to the front of the Main Gate to assist their own. Suddenly, the non gun crew marines opened fire, killing outright one QC, taking over the Main Gate, and instantly taking us all hostage.

SP [Sam Pyle](#) later related that he was posted at a bunker off the flight line at that time and remembered hearing shots and radio transmissions.

Both Tuy Hòa, USAF SPs were held hostage, along with the QCs, by SVN marines who held weapons on us as we lay face down in the bunker. Armed SVN marines stood guard over us, sitting around the hatch with weapons locked and cocked, and pointed at our heads. I remember Weldon Witt was with me at the time, and we more-or-less said our *good-byes* and waited for the standoff to end.

The tension in the air was electric, and we could tell that things were escalating between the SVN marines, and QC troops (still growing in numbers). It seemed like the whole 632nd SPS was waiting nearby to retake the gate, and God knows what else, if the Vietnamese failed to regain control.

Everything seemed frozen time, and I was certain that a *single shot* would result in a massacre and large number of allied deaths. Time slowed to an eternity for us.

Hours passed in the bunker. We still did not know if we would live or die, and the SVN troops were both unwilling to budge from their entrenched positions. Suddenly, a SVN Marine General and his staff roared up to the gate, arriving from downtown. In a flurry of shots, screams and vicious beatings -- it was over just as fast as it had started. The incident came to a close when the SVN marine commander took control of his troops.

We wrote our report after we got our wits back. Rumors were that the shooters were taken away and hanged, and that others went to jail. I was never sure of the actual results.

Although this incident happened in 1968, during the Tet Offensive, I do not believe it was part of a NVA/VC attack, but just something that got out of hand between troops that had been partying and were told "No" by QC Military Police.

Gary Steele. 632nd SPS.

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