

**Phù Cát Air Base**  
**Sapper Attack! February 22, 1969**

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(AKA: *Fearless Pig-Killer* ),

37th SPS, Cobra Flight, Charley 10, Sniper Ambush Team

*"The K-9 handler had been wounded in the elbow by AK-47 fire..."*

**WARNING - GRAPHIC PHOTOS are included in this  
account of the Sapper Attack at Phù Cát AB, February 22, 1969.**

**On February 22, 1969, Phù Cát AB received a Sapper Attack. Casualties:  
US KIA 0, WIA 0, RVN KIA 0, and  
with 0 destroyed or damaged aircraft.  
NVA/VC KIA: 4, POW 1.**

**February 22, 1969 – Sapper Attack Phù Cát AB, RVN**

By Michael Sipes, Charley 10 Sniper Ambush Team.

*Reading [Joe Barbarise's Sapper Attack story](#) jogged my memories of the event so I put together a brief story of my recollections.*

All photos are by me as I had just received a new Minolta camera that day and had taken with me to the mortar pit that night to read the manual and learn how to use it.

**My fire team was assigned to the Idaho Mortar Pit**, which if memory serves me correctly was located on the northeast perimeter of Phù Cát. We began taking small arms fire at about 0300 and received a mortar *fire mission* from FDC at coordinates given by a K-9 somewhere in front of our location. I don't remember who was with me in the pit that night, but believe it was Henderson and maybe Sopher and Duran. In any event, we fired over rounds and a number of flares that night through our gun.

A short while after our fire mission began, the K-9 working the fence in front of *Idaho* approached us from the dark after exchanging the appropriate challenges was allowed to approach the pit. **The K-9 handler had been wounded in the elbow by AK-47 fire** and was taken for medical attention up by the duty driver who was resupplying us with mortar rounds. I would be very interested in knowing if anyone remembers who the K-9 handler was, and what was the outcome of his injuries.

The next morning, I was assigned recon to recover bodies.

A 37th Security Police ton'n'half Truck was used to transport enemy dead, wounded, their weapons and explosives cache. Viet Cong body count ended up at four ( ) KIA, one (1) wounded Viet Cong captured alive.



Photo *above*, and closeup *below* SP Truck being loaded with KIA Viet Cong bodies. Concrete blocks are used to keep rigor mortis bodies in place as vehicle moves.





**(above)** Phan Rang AB perimeter fields, as seen from SP Towers with M60 machineguns.

**(below)** Recovered Viet Cong weapons, explosives, and equipment. One of the other recon groups uncovered a large cache of weapons and the clothing left behind as the sapper team disrobed to leave behind as much human scent as possible. Of interest is that undergarments of at least two women were found in the clothing pile. By the clothing count, projections were that the sapper team was about strong.



As best as I can remember, the one live but wounded Viet Cong (below photo) was turned over to the ROK's Tiger Division for medical attention and later interrogation.

**Photo:** (below) Airmen gently lift and place a wounded Viet Cong on a stretcher for transportation to Phù Cát medical facility. Four Viet Cong Sappers were killed by 37th Security Police Squadron airmen. Below Viet Cong was captured alive but badly wounded. Whether he lived or died from wounds is unknown.



(below) Four dead Viet Cong provided a ghastly appearance as they had covered their bodies with chicken and or goose fat mixed with charcoal. Their general belief was it would mask their scents and delay discovery by USAF Sentry dogs.



**Author: Tom Oller**

**Subject: Re: Phù Cát AB Sapper Attack, 22 Feb 1969, posted**

How well I remember that night! I was a member of the 822nd assigned to Phù Cát for two months. We were off duty that day, as we were to fly back to Phan Rang that night, and rotate home the next day. The attack delayed everything by one day. We were recalled to duty that night. I was on a RSAT team that responded to the flight line and guarded an area that had a ravine that came up to the maintenance buildings. VC in the past had been able to get that far. I have the same pictures taken at the mortar pit of the dead VC and the weapons captured.

**Author: Bill Marshall L/M 85**

**Subject: Re: Phù Cát AB Sapper Attack, 22 Feb 1969, posted**

Remember the night like last night! I was working L/E when the radios came alive with CSC and the motor crews were busy dropping H/E & ILL. Night turned to day and everyone sprang into action and did their job.

I remember the morning after sweeping the area and had my first look at the toll extracted on the VC's penetration effort. We later learned through the interrogation of the captured VC this was not their first incursion past the MLR, they had actually prepared in advance several penetrations attempts that were foiled. It was rumored the VC killed that morning were workers on the base during the day, however I do not know this as a fact. Cobra flight, mortar crews, K-9 and all assigned Security Policemen did their job in an exemplary manner.

*We Take Care of Our Own*