

VIETNAM
PHU CAT AB
SAPPER ATTACK!
April 16, 1969

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Phù Cát, 37th Security Police Squadron
1969; 1970-1972

PC, 823rd CSPS; TUY, 823rd CSPS; PK, 823rd CSPS; PR, 823rd CSPS; BH, 3rd SPS

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Phu Cat Sapper Attack, April 16, 1969

At approximately 0227 hrs, April 16, 1969, a K-9 handler (name unknown), working outside the ammo dump, reported an alert by his dog and challenged. Who shot first isn't important, because the K-9 handler's aim was more deadly. The sapper had been shot in his satchel charge which immediately exploded. Needless to say SATs and QRTs responded as the base went on red alert.

Lt. Gaskins (823rd CSPS) was working night shift at the time and responded to the scene. He established a defensive position beside the ammo dump and began deploying troops and calling for illumination and HE from the mortars. In fact, Gaskins was advised by FDC that some of the rounds he was calling were "danger close" and he responded with his initials to indicate that he took responsibility. Flares, M60's, M16's and grenades were employed for what seemed like a very long time that night. Later, SPs on the scene reported that movement had ceased and there was no return fire. It was decided that positions and the elevated alert condition would be maintained for the remainder of the night with a sweep to be conducted at first light.

The morning sweep revealed one sapper KIA by the K-9 the previous night. The body was hanging on the barbed wire perimeter, having been blown nearly in half by the explosion of his satchel charge. During the sweep, possible hiding places were "reconned" by 40 mm grenades and M-26 frags without return fire or other evidence of the enemy being found.

Perhaps others who were at Phù Cát can supply more detail and greater clarity, but there can be no doubt that a K-9 team once again thwarted a sapper attack, probably by more than the one dead sapper who was left on the battlefield. Official records show one U.S. was WIA. To the best of my recollection, I don't believe the wound was serious—definitely not fatal!

The 823rd CSPS was deployed TDY to RVN on or about February 25, 1969 to relieve the 822nd CSPS. CSPS units were designated as the 821st while in country.

Flight A, Sections 1 & 2 were deployed to Phù Cát AB the following day and quickly integrated into the 37th SPS.

1st Lt Arnold Houchin and 2nd Lt Les Gaskins were the section leaders of the respective CSPS sections and worked with Lt. Walker, OIC of the Phù Cát night flight.

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