



Phù Cát AB

1966-1967

photos by

[Newell Swartz](#)

PR, 35th SPS; PC, 37th SPS, 1966-1967

VSPA Life Member 262

PHU CAT - Day One, Hour One!

Trials and Tribulations of the first SPS.

The wet season caused us to seek high ground for M60 bunkers, like triple-tier graves and rusty unused railroad tracks. The one we built on the railroad tracks was great, well drained, etcetras, but at about 0100 one night the guard called in that someone was coming down the tracks toward him with a light.

A SAT team responded and arrived at the same time an armored ARVAN train chugged up. *Talk about tense*, we didn't speak Vietnamese and they didn't speak English. To make a long story short, Armored ARVAN train "1", Phù Cát SP Bunker Builder Builders "0".

Our guard towers were our pride and joy, about 15 feet off the ground, and on a clear day you could see forever. Then the monsoon rains came and the one-man guard in the towers wondered why the sandbags fell off. *TIMBERRR*. The towers fell over. Monsoon "1", Phù Cát SP Tower Builders "0".

Our base perimeter was something like 37 miles all the way around what the USAF declared was the base. At night we secured about 1/4 mile perimeter. The bulldozer cleared a nice smooth path and we dug these beautiful foxholes that were on the baseside of the road. Each foxhole was an M60 position. I mean they were about four to five feet deep, and long and wide enough to cut benches into and little niches for your canteen, webgear, helmet, radio, etcetras, with comfort to spare.

We posted the guards after dark and they cut branches to put in front of the holes for camouflauge. The guards were posted in a 2 1/2 ton truck (6X). It was dark, no lights used so Charlie wouldn't know exactly where you were when you dropped into the hole. The man would throw his ammo cans and gear from the side of the truck into the hole and then jump off the back with the M60.

Then the Monsoon came and the first foxhole we came to the guard threw his gear and another guy threw his ammo cans into the foxhole. A geyser of water shot up higher than the bed of the truck as that foxhole (and all the others) were so full of water that the only way you knew to throw the gear there was because of the branches in front of the hole. Talk about cussing and whining because the guard had to stay there. Talk about wet and miserable. Monsoon 1, Phù Cát Foxhole Diggers 0.

I was sitting on a hill (the one with the claymores, M60, grenades, flares etc) one night in the bunker with the other guard when a SAT team crept up the hill to our location. It was a moonlit night and we could see the perimeter fence pretty well from our location. We were all standing there shooting the breeze when one of the men thought he saw something by the fence. We all shut up and then saw two figures slipping thru the brush. We told one of the guys to pop a handflare over them. He hit the flare with the palm of his hand like you are supposed to but it didn't go off, and he hit it again -- it still didn't go off. I told him to hit it on the ground and he did a couple of times, but it didn't go off! The figures are now into the bushes but we can still see them. We are really annoyed now at the flare popper and using choice words about his ancestary and intelligence and lack of strength to pop the flare.

Finally, in desperation, he hit the flare on the bumper of the jeep which caused it to go off but it hit one of our guys in the chest and, luckily, bounced off. When it ricocheted off the guy's chest, it wasn't small sparks, it looked at first like the flare had set his whole chest on fire and buried part of it in him which was why we were so scared and then relieved. It had to have been the propellant that makes the flare go up rather than the phosphorus which the flare uses for light. About five very very fast brushes with his hand brushed the burning material off his chest. The guy was still brushing off his flak jacket to get rid of a small amount of sparks and stuff off his front. At first we were horrified and forgot about the two infiltraters, but when we saw he was alright and both men were cussing each other, we started laughing so hard our eyes filled with tears and we were doubled over so we lost track of our two infiltraters.

We had mortars pop some 81mm flares. I always hated mortar flares because the casings would knock your helmet

through your knees if it hit you. VC "2", SP Flare Poppers "0". Sometimes I think the VC tried to avoid us because they thought ROKs were using us for bait to ambush them. But we were learning. If I am not boring anybody, next time I can tell you sometime about our duck and tiger hunts. So long for now.

Newell Swartz

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