

Phan Rang AB
6258th Combat Support Group/AP
35th APS
1965-1966
B.C.

by Joseph V. Barth, Maj USAF (Ret. RIP)

The 6258th CSG/AP was the first home for the Air Police assigned to Phan Rang AB: RVN starting in Oct 1965. The Air Police were assigned to the Group HQ.



I arrived in Dec of 1965 and there were 13 enlisted personnel and two officers there when I arrived. One of the officers was [CAPT Reg Maisey](#) who returned to RVN in time for the Tet season of 1968 when he was killed while trying to get ammo to one of his bunkers. ([Maisey received the Air Force Cross](#) for this heroic action and - *personal opinion* - had he been on flight status he would have won the Medal of Honor). The other officer was [1LT Fred Reiling](#) [retired LTC]. They were both TDY to Phan Rang and left soon after I arrived, to the best of my knowledge (Memories for that kind of detail get a bit fuzzy after 35 years).

(Photo Left: 1966, Đà Nẵng AB, 1LT Reiling with base commander Colonel Eisenbrown.)

The 6258th was commanded by one of the "wildest" and most beloved officers I've ever had the pleasure to work for. COL Ben Matlick was responsible for getting Phan Rang built and he gave us the impression that the sun went up when the cops *ran it up* - and God help anyone that tried to mess with "his" cops. He was so respected that about 90% of the 600+ cops volunteered to go with him to Phù Cát when he finished at Phan Rang.

COL Ben gave us the support we wanted and made sure that we had first "dibs" on whatever we needed, and he really was good at *looking the other way* when we needed to *find* needed supplies and equipment. For example, anyone remember the M151 jeep with the 66K5432 hood number? Uh - my last four of my serial number at the time - *why*, it was 5432 of course! (We used real serial numbers not the SSAN now in use).

We had a small perimeter around the compound, and the runway area was the responsibility of the RVN forces until we received more troops in Jan of 1966. The runway was PSP and the famous CO RMK / BRJ was building the "real" runway and the permanent housing.

The cops were living in hooches we built ourselves - at first they were basic tents on concrete pads, and then we framed them in. Seems to me we had 10 cops or so per hooch and we managed to survive.

One special thing I remember was that the first Purple Heart awarded at Phan Rang went to a dog handler that met a punji stick the hard way. Now, this may have been after we became the 35th APS but I tend to remember that COL Ben made the presentation. Another thing is not a real inspiring story, but I was sniped at on the way to the bomb dump at Phan Rang at daybreak. Bullet hit the outside mirror on the jeep, [furrowed my cheek](#) and kept going. Never even saw the SOB!

Found some more pictures - names aren't real clear - too much memory fog! Also found a very rare artifact - I have the game ball from the base championship of 1966 when we defeated the *4\$@* Red Horse 7-6 in spite of the fact that "somehow" the weight of the load on the convoy --- You see, most of the best softball players were with me on a convoy that went to Phù Cát and brought back a load of metal roofing (actually, think this was one that went to Nha Trang with a stop at Phù Cát on the return leg). The engineers at Phù Cát assured us that the weight was ok but - about half way home, the trailer broke almost in half. We managed to get two more trailers brought out and we reloaded the roofing and still made it in time for the game. Hang in there.

Photo: Baseball captions: "Air Police vs. Red Horse: (19)68 AP 7, RH 6."



I guess I was one of the lucky ones in our business since I was allowed to be in command of various units for 11 years out of the 22 I put in. I can't count the number of NCO's that saved my butt -- and I am inordinately proud of the fact that most of them went on to win many AF and NAF honors as well as to earn lots of stripes.

I even was "blessed" to have one of the wildest LT's ever to work for me -- a guy named Dick Coleman when I was in the PI commanding the 3rd SPS. Dick went on to earn the first star ever worn by a dyed-in-the-wool cop since Dick held every job in the field except as a air policewoman/security policewoman and a K-9. Uh, Dick was a handler once upon a time but never the dog, although there was a time in the PI when -- well, best left for him to tell!

On 8 Feb 1966, squadron names were changed from the 625th CSG/AP, and we became the [35th APS](#), and the rest, as they say, is history.

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