

## NAGGING QUESTIONS

BIEN HOA AB, SVN

34th ABG/Air Police

1964-1965

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There I was, in the barracks latrine at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, getting ready to go on day shift. It's early August 1964. In walks the First Sgt. with a rather grim look on his face. He announces that one of our ships had been fired on in the Gulf of Tonkin. Congress has passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution authorizing a troop build-up and LBJ has signed it. He's looking for volunteers to be first in, and I, never one to learn, was one of the first hands to go up. Never mind that I had no idea where this Gulf of Tonkin was. He gave us a few hours to pack up and we were airborne. Short refueling stop in Guam, another at Clark AB in the Philippines, and next stop Tan Son Nhut AB, South Viet Nam. Quick shuttle up to Bien Hoa and home-sweet-home. *Well not quite.* As you can see from the [pictures](#), they were still building our barracks, so we camped out in tent city in what was known as the Navy area, a compound shared by the Navy pilots that flew the WWII Skyraiders and Navy Seabees working on improving the runways to accept the bigger planes. We finally got settled in and things were going smoothly until Halloween night when all hell broke loose. Nothing like the first sound of incoming mortar shells to get your attention. Quite the pucker factor, I'll say. And one of our guys on duty three nights prior opened fire on the waist-high weeded area between the runway and taxiway. He was written off as *trigger happy -- Nothing to it.* In hindsight, everyone agreed that it was the scouting party for the mortar team but nobody manned up enough to apologize to the lowly security cop who did a terrific job. At least they did come through a few days later and saturated that area with agent orange. Nice of them to open that barn door so the horse could come home.

OK...back to that nagging question – several actually: If nobody knew we were coming, *why were they so busy building all those new barracks?* And why were they *planning for the arrival of heavy bombers?*

And here's the big one: *How did we wind up with boots on the ground one day before Congress and LBJ put through the resolution?* Hmmm!