

Binh Thuy Air Base...

Devil Flight

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Late in 1969, at Binh Thuy AB, I was a young Airman First Class at the ripe old age of 21 and working midnight shift, as we called it. The hours were 1800-0400 hours, and most of the base security forces were on duty during these critical hours. I was responsible for transporting on-coming shift personnel and off-going personnel. I transported them to and from the barracks, CSC (Central Security Control), and posted many of the Devil Flight (midnight shift) Airmen.

On one particular night I was instructed by my Flight Chief and Assistant Flight Chief (MSGT Spragg & TSgt Fieldhouse) to load the 2 1/2 ton flat bed truck with ammunition. I was then to transport the ammo out to the far perimeter for H&I (Harassment and Interdiction) firing. This was approximately 0100 hours in the morning and most of my other various duties had been completed. The flat bed was loaded with large amounts of M60, M16, .38, M-90 Recoilless Rifle, Flares, Hand Grenades, 40 MM Grenades, etceteras.

The other perimeter patrols including the SAT (Security Alert Teams), K-9 Supervisor, and QRT's (Quick Reaction Teams) Fox # 1 and Fox # 2 were also instructed to respond to the north end of the perimeter near Tower Kilo #15 Alpha. The perimeter road was narrow at this point and there was swamp on both sides of the road with deep trenches for water run off.

Flight personnel chose the ammo for their respective weapons and commenced to fire northward off the perimeter. The Flight Chief instructed the Mortar Pit (Fire Fly) to shoot an illumination round out over the perimeter in our direction, so we could see where we were shooting. As Fire Fly fired the round it burst or opened prematurely over our heads. All personnel were accustomed to the sound of the metal shaft as it spun over and over in the air. Security personnel began to crawl under vehicles and seek cover from the falling object which could kill an individual if struck.

I jumped off the bed of the truck and crawled under it. I soon noticed the area was beginning to become *very bright* and I could hear the hissing sound of burning phosphorus. I heard the burning flare strike the flat bed just above my head. At this point security personnel were yelling and running down the perimeter road in both directions. I knew then I had to do something---if I ran, the load of ammunition could explode before I or anyone else could reach safety. I was compelled to attempt to save the lives of my fellow airmen, or die trying.

I knew this was a *grave* situation so I vaulted upon the back of the flat bed, and was confronted by the *sun itself* having landed amidst the weapons and ammo! Scared? You bet! I grabbed the smoldering silk parachute, which was still attached to the raging glare, and whirled the brilliantly burning phosphorus flare with all my strength out into the swamp.

My night vision was now zero, yet immensely concerned, I began kicking ammunition around on the back of the flat bed, attempting to keep the remaining burning phosphorus from igniting the ammo. I was astonished and very thankful nothing happened.

I was applauded by my Flight Chief and peers and credited for potentially saving several lives. My Flight Chief, MSGT Spragg and Assistant Flight Chief, TSgt Fieldhouse, documented this and submitted me for the Airman's Medal. This action was terminated by the NCOIC of Weapons Systems Security, who stated that "I did nothing anyone else would not have done".

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