

Binh Thuy Air Base
632nd Security Police Squadron
TET 1967

10-49! Mortar attack!

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(1967-1968)

I was a member of the 632nd SPS on Binh Thuy AB from May 1967 to May 68, except for a month TDY to Tân Sơn Nhứt in December 1967. An early Tet mortar attack, February 4th, 1967, killed a fellow SP named A1C Gary Midkiff and brought the war home to us all, as earlier recalled by fellow SP Tony Ralston for VSPA. The attack I remember most was during the Tet Offensive the night the VC successfully penetrated the south side of the perimeter and got all the way into the field near CSC and the flight line hangers. That night, myself and another SP were on the entry control point to the flight line.

We were seated on the top of the open-top sandbag bunker when I saw a streak of fire arch over a nearby hanger, and hit and explode a light tall unit parked about thirty yards from us. We flipped backwards into the bunker, somehow unhurt. All this happened in a instant. 10-49! Mortar attack!

Mortar rounds impacted all around us and seemed to come in forever while we tried to crawl inside our helmets. They really plastered the flight line and parking pad. I remember the sound of shrapnel hitting the bunker, medal revetments, and aircraft parked near us. The SP in the bunker next to us began screaming on the radio that he was hit. The SSgt in charge of the area drove by us, put the wounded guy in the jeep and got him to CSC, all the while under heavy mortar fire. I have often thought he should have received a medal for that. At this late date I can't recall his name. The wounded guy was only clipped in the ear by shrapnel!

As I remember, when the VC overran the k9 post on the perimeter, the SP was wounded in the arm and his dog was killed by a thrown grenade.¹ My bunkmate, Larry Mickelson from St. Paul Minn., was a member of a SAT jeep that was firing on the VC. Larry was firing the jeep mounted M60 and yelling into the radio all the while. CSC called to tell him to quit yelling, they couldn't understand him with all the screaming and firing going on. The stress level was quite high at this point!

We hugged the bunker all night and waited, trying to get a shot at the sappers. We knew from the radio transmissions and firing that they were getting closer and closer to our position. After daylight, an aircrew member came walking up to the hanger in front of us like nothing was happening. As he walked through the open hanger, a burst of small arms fire came through from the otherside of the building. A round hit an upright fan next to the guy, knocking it over. Reality hit like a ton of bricks and he really beat-feet out of the area.

Not long after that, the last VC was killed in the field on the otherside of the hanger. As I recall, one ARVIN was killed by a grenade and the VC was crushed by a APC while hiding in the tall grass. The ARVIN tied the dead VC to the APC and drug him to the main gate to be displayed along with the other enemy bodies.

If I remember right, we underwent twenty three mortar, recoilless rifle and two sapper attacks between May 67 and May 68. Some of them were only a few rounds and some were over a hundred a night. Somehow, this one, I remember the most.

Thus ended another long night on Binh Thuy during the Tet Offensive.

Sam (*Gomer*) Pyle

1. Dennis Smith, K-9 handler, Bronze Star w/V, and Purple Heart. MWD K-9 Sentry Dog, Bunkie (tattoo unknown) KIA.

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