

VIETNAM

31st SPS

Tuy Hòa Air Base

*The Biggest SNAFU Secret I Knew
in the Vietnam War:*

SHOTGUN!

by John Fox

1969-1970

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The Biggest SNAFU SECRET:
Aliases used to protect the guilty

At Tuy Hòa AB, Security Police walked the flight line and carried shotguns for five hours at a stretch. A hundred degrees--*they still walked*. Monsoon storm--*they still walked*. The shotguns were suppose to be loaded with 12 gauge .00 rounds (4/1), with a load of 12 more rounds in a pouch. Sometimes we found that someone had replaced the rounds with birdshot--and that really pissed us off! Sometimes someone inserted a sixth *unauthorized round* in the weapon.

One night, after walking five hours, and carrying that damn shotgun, one of the security policemen, *Airman Smith*, headed out to the edge of the flight line to relieve the bunker guard, *Airman Brown*. [Editor: I have the feeling Airmen Smith and Brown will be blamed for a lot in these SNAFU Stories] Smith had to spend the next three hours in the flight line bunker, with an M16, while Airman Brown (relieved) turned in the shotgun and went back to the SP hooch.

While these two sky cops were waiting for the Relief Jeep to pick up relieved Airman Brown, Airman Smith decided to *clear the shotgun* before he gave it up. After ejecting all five rounds and placing them on top of the bunker, he began watching a C-130 that had just landed and was taxiing back up the runway. He said (as he aimed his shotgun towards the runway), "*Sometimes I'd just like to be able to shoot this thing at a real target!*" and then he squeezed the trigger on the EMPTY shotgun--**BOOOOOM!**

The startled Airman Smith saw sparks fly from the tail of the C-130! Unfortunately, Airman Brown *also saw* what happened. Smith quickly rechecked the five rounds on top of the bunker and then re-jacked the charging rod back--an empty casing flew out of the chamber and landed on the ground! Ohhh @!%\$#@! Airman Smith rechecked the rounds on the bunker again, and all the rounds in his pouch, and they were all there.

Airman Brown picked up the expended round and put it in his pocket. They looked at the far end of the flight line and saw the relief jeep coming, but still about two posts down. Airman Brown said, "Quick, give me the shotgun. I'll go down to the next post and wait there." So, Airman Smith waited for the jeep to arrive, just a few minutes later.

They asked where Airman Brown was and were told that he was down at the next post. He forgot to mention any unusual events, and *not a word was said about anything else*. The jeep took off. The rest of the shift Airman Smith *sweated blood...* and it wasn't from the heat. When he turned his M16 and ammo in, in the morning, nothing was said about anything unusual.

Airman Smith went back to his hooch and tried to sleep--but a drink sounded better. When Smith woke up, he and Airman Brown discussed the issue. They determined that an *extra sixth round* had probably been stuck in the magazine and not removed, and just decided that it was a good time to come out. And yes, he had failed to look in the weapon properly. They determined that the noisy four engines of the C-130 must have drowned out the shotgun blast, so there was not too much to worry about--**RIGHT? after all :**

1) aircraft landed with small arms battle-damage fairly often, *and*

2) *if* certain Airmen kept their mouths such, *and*

3) *as long as* some confused crew chief didn't get *too* curious... and, most importantly,

4)... *Who Would Notice?*



Only a few people know the full extent of this story (such as the names of *Airmen Smith and Brown*--and that's just how *it will have to be*.

And that's the biggest SNAFU SECRET I ever knew--*and kept*--in the Vietnam War. So, don't tell anyone.

**John Fox,
Tuy Hòa Air Base,
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