

## **U-TAPAO RTAFB**

**635th SPS, K-9**

**by HL HARTFORD**

I came to U-Tapao RTAFB as a new Patrol Dog Handler. The canine I was first given was a real bad one named Sport. I was told he had not been out of his kennel in months. After about three or four days, I felt we were both ready to take a walk. I walked him around the kennel area a few time with little or no commands. Before going on post, I said the NO word: NO... sit. He would not. As I started to correct the problem (take Command as the lead dog) he bit my arm and would not let go. About 30 other handlers saw what was going and came to my aid taking the dog. I did a visit to the hospital on base.

I told the Sgt to let me go back, that it would just take more time with the dog. He informed me *No* and I was given another partner, *Tiki*, a truly wonderful good looking, smart canine. We took to our post and Tiki, like me, liked to check out the post before the long hours ahead.

One night we saw a B-52 returning to base flying very low. Most of the bomber's lights were out. He made a turn over the Gulf and tried making another landing, but when he was only about 300 or so yards he dropped out of the sky into the trees. I was informed that only the gunner and co-pilot made it out. I never found out if they made it home.

The B-52 was flying low bombing runs a lot, and we lost about 17 in all. As for us canine we did alright. From time to time, being on the front line, the SP's would shoot flares and the casings would fall from the air making a load noise. We tried running for cover but their was no cover. After a while we could place the noise and just move away from it.

At the end of our shift we would take our MSD can loaded with rain gear and equipment and stand by the road waiting for the K-9 Truck to pick us up. We would show the Sarge our weapons were unloaded, then jump in the back with our canine partners.

One Sunday in December I met Bob Hope backstage as he was coming out to meet the troops at U-Tapao RTAFB. He said a few things that got him in a bit of trouble with the Thai government, which was recorded in the press. I also recall the Air Force moved troops from Nam to Thailand. This I belive was to keep from putting the dogs down, because they could not be returned to the states.

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