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**Jim Kucipeck wrote on Facebook:** Just a comment about the underlying division between branches of the military in regards to Vietnam. I have noticed in a few posts that a few of us have experienced "snubs" (for lack of a better term) in regards to the Air Force participation in Vietnam. Have you noticed or experienced such a thing? Perhaps it is just me! I always think what did the grunts call for when they were pinned down or in the middle of fire fight? They called for Spooky, Shadow or Stinger, napalm, hard bombs, rockets, and covering fire! Just sayin'!

**Paul Koenig:** Jim, many years ago I had a local Army infantry veteran of Viet Nam call me a REMF because I was an Engineer. Have not spoken to him in since around 1980. As with other topics some people you can't talk to.

**Floyd Shatto:** I have always had an issue with being called a REMF. Just because we were not a grunt, didn't mean we were not in the shit. Army 62nd Engineers 65/66.

**Bernard Manning:** Our "Booky Birds" hauled food and ammo, troops, and anything else the grunts needed.

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...keeping the memories alive

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**Donald Gray:** I had an army guy give me a hard time at a rally. He got in my face about how great we had it and how hard they had it. I just explained to him how fn stupid he was lol. He's actually the only one I ever had words with.

**Paul Koenig:** Donald Gray, there were no great places in country when no place was safe from being subject to attack.

My Engineer Battalion was at Phang Rang so I have to say it was a great place for the PX and the Bamboo Viper.

**Donald Gray Paul Koenig:** Paul this guy was an idiot and was looking for a fight and almost got one. A few level headed men from all branches stepped in and calmed it down. I hate when people tell me that I had an air conditioned barracks and wonderful chow. After my second bout with food poisoning I started trading gun parts for C-Rations lol.

**Paul Koenig:** That's funny Don, when I was at one of our work areas I only ate breakfast in the mess hall. The food was terrible. I learned to eat in the village during this period

**Donald Gray Paul Koenig:** We weren't allowed to go to the village in 1970. I would have probably tried it. The breakfast was one of the better meals there. Powdered eggs, hard to mess that up lol. When I left Nam I went to Thailand, Udorn then NKP. The food there was much better although I ate mostly off base.

**Floyd Shatto Paul Koenig:** The 62nd Engineers was at Phan Rang also 65/66 building the runways...

**Bob Tucker Donald Gray:** Obviously the idiot never ate at Baston Hall. One thing I liked about being out on the towers was that I got to eat C-Rats.

**Donald Gray Bob Tucker:** True. The guy wasn't even a grunt he was artillery.

**Norman Young:** I remember always checking the bread to make sure there was no flys embedded in it.

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**Gary D. Neitzke:** The windshield wipers can't work without the support system behind them!  
Ah! I can see clearly now...

**Robert Chapplelear:** A-37s enjoyed a pretty good reputation with Grunts. we often had grunts come by our squadron building and our quarters to thank us for our support. We even had ground commanders come and give us Christmas Presents.

**Donald Luke Jim Kucipeck:** This will be a tad bit long and have posted parts of it from time to time. I live in Tucson, AZ on the opposite side of town from Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ.  
I "enlisted" in the Air Force during June 1967. I had graduated from high school during 1964, attended a year of college majoring in Civil Engineering (turned 18 during January while in college) Family finances did not make it possible to continue in college. I had gained experience as a machinist during my high school summers, courtesy of my father getting me a trainee machinist job at the machine shop he worked at. After leaving college I got a job as an apprentice machinist at a defense contractor. Once I lost my educational deferral, I knew I was ripe for being drafted. A friend from high school, who had joined the Air Force, was home on leave and advised that I should join the Air Force before getting drafted. My employer found out I was considering enlisting and informed me that due to their critical defense work, they could get me a deferment. I thought about it. I also thought about the fact that my mother's side of the family lived in Eastern Canada . . . but my father and uncle had served in the Navy during WWII (uncle in the Canadian Navy)

I made an informed decision and chose to enlist in the Air Force. About a month after committing to the Air Force, I got my draft notice . . . but the Air Force owned me. When I got my orders for Vietnam (I was aircraft maintenance, 43151A), my first stop was Nha Trang as a member of the 4th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) as a maintainer and repairer of AC-47 Spooky gunships (aka Puff, The Magic Dragon). While at Nha Trang, I was at the outdoor movie theater when the sirens started going off and people started looking for cover, said it was probably mortars.

Within a short time, I found myself at Da Nang. My first night there about 13 122 rockets impacted within several hundred yards of our barracks. I found the shelter and met a few rats .

More rocket attacks would follow in the year I was there. After a while, they just become part

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of life . . . sirens, take shelter, wait it out . . . I put my heart and soul into making sure the AC-47s we had at Da Nang were in the best shape we could accomplish with the sometimes limited supplies we had, ready to take to the sky each night to provide support for the ground troops.. It was not uncommon for young soldiers to show up showering praise on the Spooky guys for saving their butt two nights ago . . . or last night . . . or two weeks ago, wanting to buy you a drink or giving you some MPC to get a drink.

\*\*\*\*\*

Fast forward to recent times. We have a VVA chapter in Tucson that puts on an annual event, Nam-Jam. They set up a couple GP Medium tents with memorabilia from our time in Southeast Asia. At the time I did not wear anything to identify me as former military (I only served 11 years) or Vietnam Veteran. I suggested to my teenage daughter that I would be interested in attending to see what it was all about. Several individuals manning the museum display were wearing their shirts from their former service in the Army. One asked if I had served and I said yes, He asked if I served in Vietnam. I replied "Yes" He asked who I served with and when I said the Air Force, his face turned red and he and his partner got really angry and yelled at me that the Air Force had no right to claim they were Vietnam Veterans. Their language was pretty disrespectful and foul. Eventually one of the guys stated that if I did not leave the tent, he might do something that could get him in trouble. Both of them kept saying, "LEAVE NOW" repeatedly until we left. Needless to say, my daughter was somewhat confused why they would treat me that way.

Several years later I attended the same event but with a Vietnam Vet hat and an Air Force and Spooky pin on it. One of the same guys saw me and started his anti-Air Force tirade so I left. A few years later, I joined VVA 106 and became active, helping out with the annual event and several other events they put on. After about three years and them not being able to remember my first name, it seemed that if you weren't a former Marine or Army member from the Vietnam Era, you were invisible. After three years of being invisible, I walked away . . . It's interesting that when I meet other veterans from the Vietnam Conflict outside of the VVA environment, and we get talking, I never get that kind of disrespect, especially when I mention Spooky or Puff. For all you AC-119 and AC-130 guys out there, although it's not right, they remember you providing support but the word "Puff" is stuck in their heads. I do my best to let them know that Shadow, Stinger and Spectre were all part of the support they received when they needed it badly.

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Yeah, I got to sleep in a bed at night, take showers, eat at a dining hall and know where I would be day after day while in Vietnam but, as stated, I did not wait to be drafted, I made an informed choice and enlisted . . . I did not have to experience what the combat soldiers did and those same soldiers and our Security Police kept us protected and safe so that we could do our work and support those same soldiers with the Dragon's Breath from the AC-47, AC-119 and AC-130 fixed wing gunships

**Bob Hoffman:** Wonder if we crossed paths, I was a Dog Handler at Nha Trang and walked many of miles on the tarmac in front of the C47s as well as the 2 C-119s and a few Cobra gunships. Was given a inside tour of a an AC-47 by a maintenance guy, what a thrill, a very impressive AC. I was there from Jan 69 to Oct 69.

**Donald Luke Bob Hoffman:** My stay at Nha Trang was very brief. mid November 1968 to early December 1968 when I boarded a C-130 headed for Da Nang. Nha Trang was the home base for the 4th SOS until mid 1969 when they relocated to Phan Rang. I got the usual at Nha Trang, incoming orientation, shots, Stand familiarization with the AC-47, shots, issued jungle fatigues, flak vest, helmet, etc. more shots . . . !!!!!

I was assigned as a crew chief eventually at Da Nang on one of the AC-47 aircraft. Whenever it was due periodic maintenance, it would fly down to Nha Trang for 3-5 days and I would usually go with it to babysit it during the maintenance being performed. Later on, my aircraft and I would go to Phan Rang for the periodic maintenance. I didn't get to learn the layout of Nha Trang or Phan Rang very well as I was only there for short periods of time. Most of my time was at Da Nang, December 1968 through November 1969.

**Joseph Karkoszka:** Yep, seems like they talk smack until they need help to save their butts from being overrun or whatever heavy support to soften up an area for them. Not to mention picking up wounded and KIA's under heavy fire as well.

**Rodney Bowen:** Some years ago I walked into the local VFW to do some research for a personal project. So one of the post officers ask who I was. I gave my name and that I had served in USAF at Phan Rang. He said " I suppose that is ok." I have never set foot in another VFW since. By the way he informed me he was Marine. I suppose that is ok also.

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**Donald Gray:** I came home and was told by the VFW that I couldn't join because Vietnam wasn't really a war and we lost anyway. I also will never join a VFW even though I know that they are all not that way.

**Ken Swickard:** In that case Korean vets are not eligible either. If you were told this, you should have reported that post to the national headquarters. They police crap like that.

**Joseph Karkoszka:** Most likely he was one of the rare ones. The type that imagine they won the war all by themselves and were invincible...morons is a better word for him.

**John Rowston:** I had a Marine thank me for guarding the planes that saved his bacon many times.

**Joseph Karkoszka:** I've worked with many a Marine; I retired from EOD which was my second job in the AF. 90% of those guys were OK, but you always have some ego brain washed clown who spoils everyone's day.

Jim Gorman Life is about choices. We chose to enlist for 4 years. Some chose to be drafted, some chose to join the Navy or Marines. Some did enlist in the Army. We were all assigned jobs to do towards the War effort. There were guys in all branches of the Military that never left the States from 1962-1975, the duration of the Viet Nam War. I deal with Veterans of all branches everyday of the week and by in large, most are appreciative of everybody's service. As far as being "snubbed." You know what you did for your tour of duty, so stand tall Airman and thank you for your Service and Welcome Home Brother.

**David L. Hoppe:** I remember going for my initial physical for the draft. We were waiting to go home and the Marines came in and reviewed the draftees getting ready to go to Army. They took a few and drafted them into Marines. I knew then I wanted more control over what service I would join!

**Tom Starr:** I just explain that I scored high enough on the tests so that I had a choice what branch I went into.

**Howard Taylor:** I have served in 3 different branches, Had Combat tours with 2 and each bad

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mouths the other but really respects what each contributes when the chips are flying. Also one MOS will trash another but most realizes that it takes all hands to complete a mission.

**Wayne Stoeffler:** I feel that all branches of service did their duty and many lost their lives in every branch. I was in the Army for a career and had it much easier than the soldiers in the Infantry, Artillery, and Armored units. That being said I have but one question. How many, from each branch of service, gave their lives in the Vietnam war? That should clarify who had it the easiest, if there is such a thing in any war.

**Jim Gorman:** How many that gave their lives from each branch has nothing to do with who had it easiest! I was an Entomologist Specialist, handled herbicides & pesticides. I sprayed bugs, I carried my weapon maybe 10 times in a year. Our barracks was next to the SP's, I saw those guys on the move 24 hours a day for a year risking their lives on the perimeter for our safety and their own. We lost some SP's at Phan Rang and ask those SP's that survived how easy they had it. Thanks to my job in the Air Force I am now 60% disabled. I had it easy! None of us had it "easy." Most of us were E2 or E3 over there. Almost 39,000 of the almost 59,000 of the Names on the Wall were E1, E2, or E3. Someone once said, "War is Hell."

**Wayne Stoeffler:** My time on Phan Rang Air Base Oct 1967 - Oct 1968 was a cake walk in comparison to the men who fought on Hamburger Hill. Just saying. Many of us were exposed to agent orange and sadly many have died or are still suffering from the side effects. Thank God all of us on this site made it out alive.

**Tom Starr:** Everybody gave some. Some gave all.

**David Wisser:** Thankfully I have never experienced that attitude from other veterans! Just looking at all of the airmen we lost flying the C-123 in Vietnam would debunk that notion completely!

**Craig Lord:** I've never experienced that. We do have some good natured ribbing with the Marines and Army guys in the dog handler assoc. We just laugh about it and are very good friends. They appreciated the HUN coming by and bailing them out.

**Donnie Powell:** I lived at Phan Rang for 19 months I was in the Army. I have all the respect for

every one that served on the Base. The SPs in the towers and patrol of the fence was true hero's. Later I served in part of the 18th AB Corp but my Unit didn't jump. We did Air Mobiles that was very dangerous but the 82nd AB made fun of us. Everyone did a job and put their life on the line.

**Paul K. Glasser:** Nope, none of that. We all did what we had to do and I think there is mutual respect. As I think about your question, I cannot recall any negative (or snobby) conversations with veterans of other branches.

**James Gilliland:** Ok all the ribbing we take I work for a large company and at my terminal we have all branches of the service working here 5 marines 4 Air Force and 1 Navy we had a couple of Army but they quit we have a lot of good nature ribbing going on but no one looks down on the other branches that's how it should be we all served and had a job to do.

**Billy Clark:** I think maybe some of us are taking others all wrong. I have been a life member of the VFW for almost 50 years and a member of the American Legion for over 20 years. I have visited them all over the country and never had any bad remarks about the Air Force. I have taken some kidding and been called almost military in regards to our soft life. I was a career Air Force 21years active duty and 19 years civil service total 40 years Air Force. When I go in a VFW WEARING MY SPOOKY HAT. The grunts including the marines won't let me by a drink and then won't let me drink it for shaking my hand. I had over 200 combat missions and listened to the troops on the ground being overrun or under continuous fire for days. I was so proud of those men. They never gave in and when we came on a TIC they called us their guardian angel. We gave them everything we had and they were praising us. I would not trade places with them for nothing. I now live in a Veterans colony originally set up for Teddy Roosevelt's rough riders. Since they have all died out it is opened up to all Vets 840 acres near Wilburton OK. We have vets from all branches of the service. We help each and are the best of friends. We fly our flag proudly and that's all that matters

**Floyd Shatto:** Is the Veterans colony the same Veterans retirement home in that area, the one with the problems recently? I live near Tulsa.

**Jim Kucipeck:** Thank you all for contributing posts today. I knew from reading some earlier posts thru the yrs. here on FB that there were some hard feelings. As we age I hope that some



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of that animosity fades!

**Joseph Burkhart:** I feel that's true Jim..I too used to get flak from other RVN guys but when it last happened I pulled out a photo of me standing by a sandbagged tent at Da Nang and said these gives me "permission " to call myself a "Vietnam Veteran"..if ya don't like it ..TOUGH..Suddenly their attitude changed..As a Vet Svc guy for our VFW post I find an appreciation for what we did then and what advice I help them with today...Its all good..

**Bob Hoffman:** I have had the privilege to be invited to a fourth of July BBQ with 6 Marines for the past 3 years. They are true Marines, 3 are wounded War Vets, one was in hand to hand with a VC in his fox hole, shot 2 times but killed the VC. They treat me with respect and are curious about my job as a Dog man. Their stories make me feel lucky to be in the AF but I do not feel demeaned in any way. When we leave the BBQ it's always done as Brothers Forever. Mutual Respect is what makes us all BROTHERS.

**Robert Barry:** I did not face that at all as a K-9 handler all of 1968 half of 69, but my friend if you catch hell from anybody give a shout out I can get fired up quick? Welcome home.

**Wayne Rodgers:** Every Vet I've talked to when wearing my Vietnam Veterans hat after I tell them USAF Shadow Gunship they remember fire from the night's sky saving them and are thankful to be alive. See we were important in Vietnam. Fly High and Proud Brothers we did our jobs effectively. Salute

**Jerry Hartley:** We all pick at each other as rivals but screw with one of us and you will be set on by us all. It's a brotherhood. We all have, and did our required tasks.

**Ken Schwandt:** I've had no problems stateside either but then I've never been to a legion or VFW. Those of all branches I meet in stores or on the street are nothing but pleasant. My Vet hat says Air Force and I've been approached by all branches with exchange of pleasantries and where were you and such...

**Charles Lee Simmons:** I haven't had any negative response from other veterans regardless of branch of service. I stick out my hand to all of them and thank them for their service. My wife and I talked about this; I believe all those who thanked me for my service were sincere. Quite

often I wear a "Disabled Veteran Cap", especially when flying. I cannot put my carry on in the overhead bin or take it down, and someone will usually do it for me. Remember a lot of these middle aged adults and younger adults are the kids and grand kids of veterans, including Vietnam. My 19 year old son asked me to go with him to see Platoon. I asked him why? The answer kind of surprised me; because I realize that I could have grown up without a father. He was 22 months old when I left for Vietnam, now he is 50. Both that son and my daughter are members of PRAB Face Book and keep up with our postings. I think a lot of younger people today are smart enough to read between the lines, whether it's political hacks or the news.

### **11 February 1970 - Not a Routine Night**

*This was probably the most notable action in which the ADGs where involved during the Australian presence at Phan Rang.*

## **11 February 1970 Not a Routine Night**



It was 11<sup>th</sup> February 1970, and the third last night-ambush patrol of our tour. Our section of eight members, was led by Cpl Noel Power, with LAC's Conway, Symons, Clarke, Woodruffe, Twomey, Grey and Ewin.

We moved out of the base just after last light and were expecting just a routine listening watch. After crossing over a footbridge on the canal we veered left before taking up a predetermined position, looking out over paddy fields. With the perimeter still to our rear we had been on watch for some three hours when the enemy probed the wire, directly behind us.

*Cpl Power was forced to make a quick decision to redeploy us out of danger.*

Unknown to the base security forces dealing with this attempted intrusion, their fire, including mortars, was landing on our position! Cpl Power was forced to make a quick decision to redeploy us out of danger. With no time to consult the base on his course of action and realizing that any enemy retreat away from the base would require them to cross, either the same footbridge that we had earlier used, or the main vehicle bridge about 15 metres further along, we moved 300 metres up the canal to cover both these crossings. We had been in our new position about two minutes when movement could be heard from the darkness on the other side of the canal. A sharp exchange involving small arms and grenades followed - lasting approximately five minutes. After contact was broken we made several sweeps of the area across the bridge but could not pick up anything moving towards our position.

At approximately 0345 hrs we detected movement nearby and reported back to control, requesting them to provide illumination from the base, but nothing could be seen, and our presence by then was well and truly compromised. We were called in and returned to the base through the wire at approximately 0430 hrs. At dawn we made a sweep outside the wire, where contact with the enemy had occurred, and we came across a wounded enemy soldier in the canal, with one leg half blown off. Interrogation of this prisoner ascertained that he was an NVA Artillery Major, and in charge of the failed enemy operation. We also discovered the bodies of two other men, killed during the night. They were both Sapper Squad Leaders. Their mission had been to reconnoiter the base for a combined sapper and mortar attack, involving two Companies, planned to be delivered within 72 hours! The attack never materialized. This was probably the most notable action in which the ADGs were involved during the Australian presence at Phan Rang.

The American Unit History recorded that the ADGs performed in an outstanding manner. And for his initiative and leadership during the night, Cpl Noel Power was awarded the Military Medal - the first such award to a member of the RAAF since the Second World War. Records of the ADGs in Vietnam suggest that for this group, the war had been a mixed experience. Despite the frequent monotony of their duties, during periods when enemy activity was at a low level, there were other times, when theirs was a most active war - of a kind which was quite uncharacteristic of the rest of the RAAF commitment. Evidence of this can be found most obviously in the fact that the ADG's mustering, though numerically small, suffered casualties of one killed and seven wounded-in-action, with a further three members killed and

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five wounded in non-combat incidents. Fatalities among ADGs represented 28 per cent of all deaths among RAAF personnel in Vietnam. Apart from one MBE, one MM and eight Mentions in Despatches, ADGs accounted for 4 of the 10 Distinguished Flying Medals awarded to RAAF personnel.

P.S. In 1969, there were 525 rocket or mortar attacks on Phan Rang Air Base: US casualties were 2 KIA, 52 WIA. RVN casualties, 16 KIA, 8 WIA. Aircraft: 2 Destroyed and 38 Damaged.

ADG Flights were deployed to South Vietnam with 2 Squadron at Phan Rang Air Base and No. 1 Operational Support Unit (1OSU) at Vung Tau. In Vietnam ADGs conducted both static security tasks and security patrols outside the base perimeter, thus disrupting the Viet Cong ability to conduct stand-off attacks against the bases.

(Many thanks to **Ken Ewin** Airfield Defence Guard with No 2 Sqdn RAAF at Phan Rang for sharing his Vietnam experience and for **Peter Ruston**, 2 Sqdn. RAAF for sending in this story. Also please note that the picture for this story is an actual picture of a RAAF ADG team, but it may not necessarily depict the actual members described in this story. Also please note that *meter* is the American *spelling*, and *metre* is preferred everywhere else.)



### **Shadow's Light Welcome as Sun**

*(Seventh Air Force News, June 18, 1969)*

By Capt. William R. Casey

**PRAN RANG** - The Illuminator carried by the AC-119 Shadow aircraft of "B" flight, 71st Special Operations Squadron, Phan Rang AB, has been as welcome as the sun to Allied ground forces in South Vietnam.

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The illuminator system is a precision device that produces high-intensity illumination in either the visual or infrared spectrum. The system was developed as a night observation device for illuminating objects on the ground from a standard operational aircraft.

When operating at full power, the system's light beam with rhodium collector is rated at about 425,000 lumens.

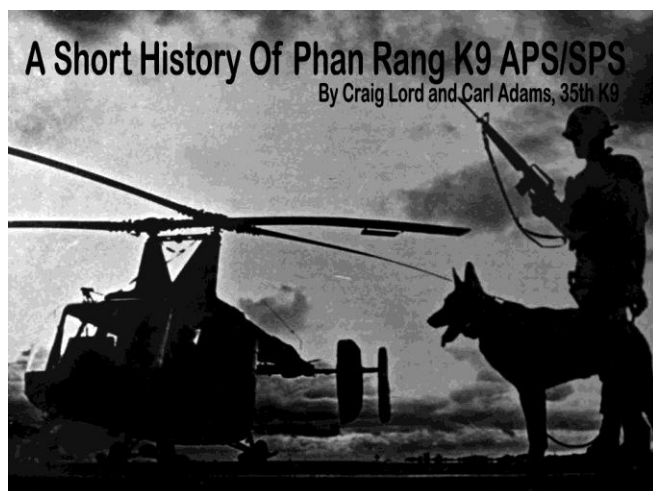
For example, were the light overhead and a mile high, you would have no problem reading a newspaper at night.

The light can be adjusted so it can be kept on target, or on a specific ground area, during aircraft movement.

The advantage of continuous white light over the flickering, relatively short illumination period offered by flares has proved its worth many times with troops in contact with enemy forces.

Shadow crews have also provided white light for night sweep operations, perimeter security, and rescue operations.

An AC-119 crew recently provided light during a battle near Tay Ninh City, then continued to shine light for a doctor performing surgery on a wounded soldier.



the base from the South Vietnamese government.

### **A Short History of Phan Rang K9 APS/SPS**

Phan Rang Air Base was originally a Japanese air base during WWII. After the war, it was abandoned, only to be re-established by the French during their occupation of Indochina. When the French withdrew, the base was once again abandoned until 1965 when the U.S. leased



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Between 1965, when the base began reconstruction, and 1972, when the base was turned over to the South Vietnamese forces, three units of Air Force Air Police and Security Police K-9 patrolled the distant perimeter of Phan Rang Air Base; the 366th, 35th, and 315th, although not at the same time. The 366th deployed from Da Nang in early 1966 (08 Feb) as the original K9 unit. At the time there were no barracks, perimeter towers or a fence line. Thus K9 and other APS began to build the perimeter and tent city.



Many of the original handlers and dogs of the 366th did not stay at Phan Rang and were deployed to other locations such as Tuy Hoa and Phu Cat because they had start up experience and were available. One of the great stories told to me by Colin Fallat (pictured above on right) was because there was no perimeter, K9 went wherever they wanted to go at night (no they did not go to the strip). They

began to think better of themselves after some long walks back in at sunrise.

During this early period Phan Rang had F4-C Phantoms also from Da Nang and began operational flying on April 1st, 1966 (note: some information also indicates March 31st, 1966).

Facilities and amenities on base continued to get better as time went on and K9 got new quarters, although the dogs still had some time before the new kennel were built.

On October 10th, 1966 the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing officially took over Phan Rang and became the host unit. The name change did not change the way we operated because the base was considered “complete by Air



**New kennels**

Force Standards." We now had domain over the perimeter fence line at night and stayed within boundaries and K9 received additional personnel and dogs, not to mention a new "state of the art" for the time Kennel was being built. The change from the 366th to the 35th for Security did not change until approximately May 1967 to coincide with the change from Air Police to Security Police.

One of the things that was very rarely talked about was the extra activities that many K9 did such as ride on Army helicopters as extra gunners, sometimes on C-123s, and numerous convoy escorts to Cam Rahn Bay and back. The helicopter rides ended in late 1967, and the C-123 rides ended in 1968. The convoys continued even after the increased enemy activity.

Progress was made in late 1967 and early 1968 with the new Kennel. The dogs deserved a good place to rest and be fed and a good place for training. We also had one of the of the best Vet clinics of all branches in Vietnam and that is a credit to the VETS and Vet Techs we had.

The amenities got better on base for everyone with improved barracks, chow hall etc. However, it did not improve on the fence line, as the ground probes increased in late 1968 and of course the stand-off attacks increased.

The following is from the Jan-Mar 69 Declassified report of the SPS Historical Report page 2. para 2.

**(2) The general atrophy in assigned strength during the quarter quickly became critical and required the daily employment of roughly 110 augmentee personnel from other unrelated career fields. At one point Security Police manning declined to such a level that 163 Augmentees were required to defend the Air Base. A contributing factor to augmentee requirements was the necessity to operate in Security Alert Condition (SACON) Yellow, a posture greater than normal strength. SACON Yellow was initiated on 18 January 69 and was in effect for 69 days during the quarter, at times on a 24 hour schedule but more frequently during the critical hours for 1900 to 0700. The Yellow Alert Condition thus produced manpower strains on those squadrons contributing augmentees as well as on the Security Police Squadron itself. The situation, however, difficult as it was, was repeatedly justified during nine enemy attacks against the installation in which the augmentee program was thoroughly tested and proven in combat.**

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One of these attacks was the stand-off sapper attack on the night of January 25th and the morning of January 26th 1969. This was not just a run of the mill sapper attack as it was modeled after the attack on TET in 1968 at Tan Son Nhut. This attack was conducted by H-13 NVA Sapper Co, 351st NVA Battalion which had a strength of approximately 300. So no, this was not just a few guys trying to get on the flight line and blow up a few C-123s.

During this time K9 worked all 69 days nearly 12 hours per night. We all did this in different squadrons but it wasn't good for the dogs and they were burning out. They were becoming ineffective. We finally got some relief when our veterinarian went to the Wing Commander and got the dogs and handlers some time off (at least one night).

We kept getting the stand-off type attacks but we still had our issues on the fence line with probes and the occasional fire fight. The stand-off attacks became day and night.

Vietnam was a diverse country geographically. It was well known for its jungles and rice paddies viewed by most on TV news, however, there were many lush river valleys, hills, mountains, coastal sand dunes and yes, arid almost desert areas. Phan Rang came under the category of desert. Even though we were close to the coast, and there were rice paddies not far away, our terrain was similar to San Antonio, Texas.

The mission of K9 was to defend personnel and resources of Phan Rang from hostile actions. Even though we had some very mean sentry dogs we were tasked with a defensive position. In late 1969 we began cross training dogs for patrol and began working outside the wire on limited missions, and were very effective.

There were approximately 5,000 personnel at Phan Rang both military and civilian at its peak; to include the South Korean Marine Tiger Division and the Royal Australian 2nd RAAF Bomb group (B-57s) and the 2nd RAAF Commandos. The 101st Airborne also had a small detachment at Phan Rang with 105mm Howitzers, and some Huey gunships.

The flying assets of Phan Rang had many missions. The F-4Cs and F-100s did bombing missions (to include North Vietnam-early), and ground support. The B-57s were versatile and not only flew close support but primarily flew night missions bombing the Ho Chi Minh truck trail to



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include Laos. The C-123 Cargo planes flew everywhere in Vietnam and were part of the Air Force Air Commando Squadrons. Because of their logistics and supply missions Phan Rang was vulnerable to constant attacks trying to disrupt this important mission.

We also had Gunships, Rescue Helicopters, Forward Air Control Aircraft, and a high priority communication center.

Anyone, Civilian or Military that has not worked a dog will never understand the bond between a handler and his dog partner. This is not a slap at any one that supports us, it is just a fact. We love our support. There is no way to describe how a handler and dog becomes one.

The handler and the dog depend on each other. The dog gives the signals and the handler must appropriately respond. On an alert you feel the tension in the leash, you see the change in the dogs posture (ears up, hair up, breathing hard etc.) and tugging left and right. He is pulling strong letting you know that he has something. He is trying to protect you and warn you, and yet wants to take care of business and attack. If he is a Scout Dog or Bomb dog he just stops and looks at where the problem is. You do everything together.

As we come to a close on this very short history the K9 mission finally closed out Phan Rang when they transitioned to the 315th on 31 July 1971 and then closed down the base March 31, 1972.

### **Some K9 Stats for Phan Rang:**

Total handlers 1966-1972: 588

Total Dogs 1966-1972: 149

### **Handlers KIA: 3**

Bernie Ford 07/05/67 Accidental.

Joel Loftis 06/07/69 Combat-hit by rocket.

Charles Orsua 07/15/69 Accidental.

### **Dogs KIA: 3**

Rennie A548 01/11/68 Combat

Fritzie 763F 01/26/69 Combat

Rex 5A77 02/22/69 Combat

## **Spooky Crew Joins Navy to Sink Enemy**

*(Seventh Air Force News, October 29, 1969)*

**PHAN RANG**-An AC-47 Spooky gunship crew of the 14th Special Operations Wing here recently provided fire support for three U.S. Navy motor patrol boat crews in contact with the enemy 7 miles south of Nha Trang City.



**Mike Trahan, AC-47 pilot.**

Enemy troops had opened fire on the Navy boats as they patrolled the coastline. The gunship crew, commanded by Capt.

**Michael Trahan**, arrived within minutes of the call for assistance. "There were a lot of gun flashes from small arms fire," recalled Captain Trahan. "Based on the amount of ground fire, we

estimated there were 50-100 enemy soldiers in the area."

Navy crews marked the enemy locations with tracers from their machine guns. Commented the captain, "They made it an easy target for us."

Navy crewmen confirmed the gunship crew touched off a secondary explosion and ignited two sustained fires.

Other crewmembers were Maj. Irvin P. Simon; Maj. Delroy Hill; Maj. John Durette; MSgt. George Dowling; TSgt. Oris Basher; SSgt. Roland Peterson; and Sergeants Dennis Lindell and Paul Kenyon.

*(This isn't the first time Spooky has teamed up with other services to fight the enemy. See Phan*

*Rang News 63, "Spooky, Army, Navy Team Up for Results".)*



### **Ideas Pay-Off for 3 Airmen**

*(Seventh Air Force News, June 18, 1969)*

**PHAN RANG** - Good ideas made money recently for three airmen here when they received cash awards for recommendations adopted under the Air Force Suggestion Program.

Col. Robert G. Goold, base commander, presented the awards to MSgt. **Wayne A. Dick**, TSgt. **Lewis O. Pardew** and Sgt. **Herbert J. Peters**.

Sergeant Dick, Derby, Kan., received. \$110 for simplifying the submission and transmission of air combat mission reports. As noncommissioned-officer -in-charge, intelligence division, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, Sergeant Dick found that several messages on the same combat mission could be consolidated into one message, saving time and money.

From Mount Prospect, Ill., Sergeant Peters, a reciprocating-engine mechanic with the 35th Field Maintenance Squadron, suggested a special wrench be used to remove and replace certain nuts on reciprocating engines. He was awarded \$25.

A fuels specialist with the 35th Supply Squadron, Sergeant Pardew, 33, Chestnut Hill, Md., received a \$20 award for suggesting the water spout at the water truck filling station he extended so that water would not be blown away by the wind as the trucks were being filled.

## The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Paddy Poll

By BILL COLLINS

S&S Vietnam Bureau Chief

**SAIGON** — As the U.S. military so often does things, so the people of Vietnam evaluate them—by the numbers.

It's a sliding scale of reference. The best things are "Number One," the worst "Number 10." In Vietnam there is little in between.

With interest running at a new high in the polls — jazz, movie and political it has been deemed high time for the publication of a consensus of opinion of our GIs, Marines, Seabees, airmen and sailors in and around Vietnam on their life in general.

From the hills and marshes, the chow halls and restaurants, highways and runways, cities and hamlets, the results of the First Annual Paddy Poll are in.

<b>Number One is:</b> --A dry pair of socks. --A dry pair of shorts. --A dry anything. --A superhighway. --A letter from your girl. --A letter from anybody. --A Saigon bar hostess who doesn't like tea. --Finding john paper in the john. --A hamburger. -- USO show with 20 chorus girls. --Pre-filled sandbags. --Change from a taxi driver. --Finding spaghetti in your C-rations and having a fork. --A dud landing next to your foxhole.	--A fly in your Kool-Aid. --Most visiting officials who have come over to "see for themselves how our boys are doing." --News that your old neighborhood hippie is 4F. --Losing your shot record. --Hondas --- all 10 billion of them. --Getting your restaurant steak cooked in "nuoc mam" sauce. --A USO show with no girls. --Mosquitoes that get hooked on your insect repellent. --The bill in a Saigon bar. --50-cent Coke. --Mud. --Incoming.
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--Being next in line.

--A port call.

--A real smile from a Vietnamese.

--Almost anything that isn't "Number 10."

**And Number 10 is:**

--Hitting the dirt in a rice paddy.

--A drive in the country.

--A drive in the city.

--A soaked pack of smokes.

—Not being able to get the item you want in the PX and then seeing it for sale a block away on a black market stand.

—MPS nickels.

--Waiting.

Thanks to **J Joseph Mack** for sharing this article from the Air Force Times, circa 1968.

## Reunion Information



Our 2018 reunion t-shirts are now on sale. This year's design is by the very talented and artistic Steve Russ. Steve was formerly with 435<sup>th</sup> MMS, Red 9 Line Delivery. Steve came up with some very innovative variations during the designing process. He turned the neck of the guitar, removing the strings, and adding a runway with two F-100s on final approach. Then the members said their aircraft wasn't represented so he started adding all the aircraft assigned to Phan Rang and it became very busy so we decided to return strings back to the neck.

The shirts are available [here](#) as well as other Phan Rang AB products like hats, polos with a different design and also something for the ladies so check it out.

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The interest in our 2018 reunion has been phenomenal. Never in our wildest dreams did we ever think it would turn out like it has. When I and several board members along with our wives trekked to Nashville last December to finalize plans for the reunion and meet with the hotel staff we were thinking maybe around 70 rooms and we kept our fingers crossed that we would fill them. In a very short period of time we doubled that figure and filled the hotel. The hotel staff said this will be the biggest event the hotel has ever hosted. Because of the numbers the hotel has given us two large hospitality suites and one smaller one all right next to one another or across the hall. The night out at the Grand Ole Opry has also been very popular. We now have 220 tickets to that event. I’m on a first name basis with the Opry Event Center.

### **Doug’s Comments**

There still is plenty of time to submit your bio for a future issue. If you have any questions what to write or how to format it, you might look back at Phan Rang Newsletter 140 to see what others have done. As you will see, any format is acceptable. Please email to me.

This newsletter was compiled and published by [Douglas Severt](#). Previous issues of the Phan Rang Newsletter are available [here](#) for download.