

**“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, Vietnam
...keeping the memories alive**

Phan Rang AB News No. 86

“Stories worth telling”

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New Squadron at Phan Rang (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Sunday, July 24, 1966, curiosity of Hank Milnark*)

Saison (7th AF) - The 615th Tactical Fighter Sq., equipped with F-100 Super Sabre jet fighters, has arrived at Phan Rang AB from England AFB, La.

The 615th, the third tactical squadron at Phan Rang, is assigned to the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing.

It is a sister squadron to the 612th which arrived at Phan Rang from Misawa AB, Japan, earlier in July.

The third squadron is the F-4C Phantom-equipped 389th Tactical Fighter Sq. which came to Phan Rang March 17.

Larry Martino Sr.: I haven't been to the other reunions but I'am excited and nervous about this one coming up!!

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615th TFS Arrives AT Phan Rang (*curiosity of Hank Milnark*)

Pilots of the 615th Tactical Fighter Squadron from England AFB, La., landed their F-100 Supersabre at Phan Rang AB July 16. It is assigned to the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing.

Lt. Col. James A. Minish of Litchfield Park, Ariz., 615th commander, led the flight from England AFB, near Alexandria, to Vietnam. He said the flight was made in easy steps over a three-day period.

Colonel Minish said though combat flying would be a new experience for most of his pilots, “They are anxious and waiting to fly their first missions.”

Col. George S. Weart of Chicago, 366th Tactical Fighter Wing commander, greeted the pilots.

The 615th is the third tactical squadron to be assigned to Phan Rang. It is a sister squadron to the 612th which arrived at Phan Rang from Misawa Air Base, Japan, earlier in July.

The third squadron is the F-4C Phantom equipped 389th Tactical Fighter Squadron which came to Phan Rang March 17, 1966. Since then pilots at Phan Rang have flown 2,500 combat sorties.

Joe Schwarzer: Hoping the 8th TBS will be well represented at the reunion. Don't think I will know anyone but nervous and anxious to meet all my PR brothers and sisters.

Phan Rang Names New Dining Facility (Seventh Air Force News, June 11, 1969. Related article “Phan Rang Names New Dining Facility After Fallen Airmen” in **Phan Rang News 1.**)

PHAN RANG — The new dining facility in the fire station on the Phan Rang AB flight line was recently dedicated to the memory of two firefighters who gave their lives in the line of duty last year.

Staff Sergeants Milard L.E. Bledsoe, Oneonta, Ala., and Emmett S. Orr, Rodgersville, Mo., died in the crash of a Rescue Squadron's HH-43E Huskie rescue helicopter on Oct. 10, 1968.

In opening the Bledsoe-Orr Dining Hall, Col. Robert G. Goold, Provo, Utah, base commander, said the men died “while performing airborne rescue firefighting duty.” He continued, “May their sacrifice and dedication to duty and country serve as an inspiration to all.”

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Lt. Col. James B. Roberts, Pleasureville, Ky., base Civil Engineer, said We feel proud that we can honor such men by dedicating this facility to them. Such dedication is one of the highest forms of tribute.

The dining facility will serve the firefighters, rescue squadron and the barrier maintenance section of the 35th Civil Engineering Squadron.



Sabres KO Gun Sites (*Seventh Air Force News, June 11, 1969*)

PHAN RANG — F-100 Super-sabre pilots of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing here recently reported killing six enemy soldiers and destroying three .50 caliber machine guns and sites 13 miles northwest of Tay Ninh City.

One of the pilots on the strike was Maj. Laurel L. Statham, Yosemite, Ky.

"The forward air control (FAC) had seen enemy activity in the area all morning," Major Statham said.

"When we arrived, he gave us an excellent target briefing, about the best I ever had," he continued. "I roiled in on my first pass and encountered ground fire. It looked like Fourth of July sparklers down there."

"I dropped some ordnance right on the FAC's smoke marker, destroying two machine guns," Major Statham said. "After my wingman dropped some bombs, I went after a gun position near a river."

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"The sparkle of ground fire gave me an excellent target as I lined up on the muzzle flashes dropped the bombs right on the target," he concluded.

Jack Anderson: Dennis Hawley, Mike Granese, Frank Carpenter and myself were all 8th Tac Bomb crew chiefs and we will all be there. I don't think Jim Sandners will be able to make this one. Looking forward to meeting you Joe Schwarzer.

Spooky Pilot Gets Vietnamese Award *(Seventh Air Force News, June 11, 1969)*

By MSgt. Jim Warner

BIEN HOA AB, Republic of Vietnam (7AF)—Major Frank L. Hines, 41, Greenfield, Ind., an AC-47 Spooky gunship pilot with Flight C, 3rd Special Operations Squadron, recently received the Vietnamese Honor Air Medal at Bien Hoa Air Base.

He was presented the medal by Lieutenant Colonel Doan Van Bang, director, of the III Corps Direct Air Support Center.

Hines earned the medal by providing air support for an Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) outpost near Trang Bang March 14, 1969.

On that particular mission, Hines and his crew assisted in breaking an enemy attack against the ARVN camp. The camp was under heavy mortar and rocket attack when the Spooky crew arrived.

For the next three hours, Hines circled the target area, dropping flares for illumination and firing on enemy soldiers trying to penetrate the outpost perimeter.

During the three-hour period, the AC-47 crew was receiving ground fire from five enemy .50 caliber machine gun positions. Hines and his crew, employing the aircraft's miniguns, destroyed two gun positions and were later credited with killing 14 enemy soldiers.

Hines has logged 170 combat missions in the AC-47 aircraft since his arrival in Vietnam in September, 1968.

Jim Erixson: In '67 flew from McChord to Tokyo in a stretch 8. Refueled, then on to Cam Rahn on Evergreen Air Charter. Then on a C-123 to Phan Rang.

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Craig Lord: I worked for Tigers for 20 years after I got out of the USAF in '71. FedEx bought us in 1989 and then I did another 17. We didn't use 747s in Vietnam (didn't have them at the time-got them circa 74). We flew DC-8s, CL-44s and the 707 may have slipped in there a couple of times in the early years. I loved working for Tigers after getting out of the AF as we were still supporting our troupes with MAC flights both passenger and cargo. We truly believed in Freedom Birds as most of us Los Angeles (LAX) were Veterans as far back as WWII. It was my honor to serve my brothers that were still in Vietnam as a former K9 handler in the 35th K9 at Phan Rang and elsewhere. It was the best feeling ever to break ground, hear the landing gear come up and turn east in a Freedom Bird. **Homeward bound to the world.**

Follow up to the story "35th TFW Awarded Vietnamese Cross Of Gallantry" in Phan Rang News 85. (Special thanks to Dave Runnells for sending these.)

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 35TH TACTICAL FIGHTER WING (PACAF)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96321

15 April 1971

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: CBPO-DC

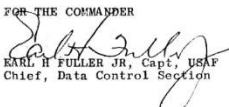
SUBJECT: Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm

TO: Servicing CBPO

1. The Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm was awarded to the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing for exceptionally meritorious service in direct support of military operations in RVN during the period of 1 September 1968 to 9 October 1970. The authority for this award is Special Order GB-116, Headquarters Seventh Air Force, dated 25 February 1971.

2. _____ was assigned to the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing during that period, as can be verified by the AF Form 7/11. However, due to late receipt of the special orders in relationship to the member's DEROS, the award has not been posted to his records.

3. Request this action be taken after assignment to the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing during the stated period has been re-verified by the appropriate records custodian.

FOR THE COMMANDER

EARL H. FULLER JR, Capt, USAF
Chief, Data Control Section

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON


SPECIAL ORDER
GB-116

25 February 1971

The award of the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm to the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing (PACAF) for exceptionally meritorious service in direct support of military operations during the period 1 September 1968 to 9 October 1970 is confirmed. The following units shared in the award for the same period except as otherwise indicated:

HQ, 35th Combat Support Group
35th Maintenance Squadron
35th Security Squadron
35th USAF Tactical Dispensary
435th Munitions Maintenance Squadron
Det 1, 612th Tactical Fighter Squadron
614th Tactical Fighter Squadron
615th Tactical Fighter Squadron
120th Tactical Fighter Squadron (1 Sep 68 to 13 Apr 69)
35th Civil Engineering Squadron
35th Services Squadron
35th Supply Squadron
35th Transportation Squadron

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE


OFFICIAL

JOHN D. RYAN, General, USAF
Chief of Staff

ELWIGHT W. COVELL, Colonel, USAF
Director of Administration

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Here is the text of the letter reproduced above with the Special Order GB-116.

Reply to Attn of: CBPO-DC

Date: 15 April 1971

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SPECIAL ORDER GB-116
25 February 1971

JOHN D. RYAN, GENERAL, USAF
Chief of Staff

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DWIGHT W. COVELL, USAF Colonel

USAF DISTRIBUTION

Director of Administration

Hank Milnark: Larry Martino this is my first reunion and I am looking forward to attending. We will be driving down from Chagrin Falls, Ohio!

16,000 In Pullout To Stay In Pacific (*Pacific Stars and Stripes, Thursday, June 19, 1969*)

WASHINGTON (UPI) —Nearly 16,000 of the 25,000 U.S. troops to be pulled out of South Vietnam will not be returned to the continental United States, it was disclosed Tuesday.

The Pentagon said 8,000 Marines—the 9th Regiment of the 3rd Marine Division —were ticketed for Okinawa; the 7,400-man 1st Brigade of the Army's 9th Infantry Division will go to Hawaii, and about 400 Marines from the 3rd Division's fighter support wing will be sent to Iwakuni, Japan.

With 1,200 Navy men scheduled to board ships in the withdrawal, the announcement left only 8,000 Army troops definitely slated for return to the continental United States.

The 8,000 will include 2,000 Army reservists and National Guardsmen, and the 2nd brigade of the 9th Infantry and its supporting units.

The announcement, made in both Washington and in Saigon, revealed for the first time that only the 2nd Brigade of the 9th division would be inactivated. The 1st Brigade will remain intact and will establish division headquarters in Hawaii.

Members of 2nd Brigade will be assigned to other units. The Pentagon said the location for the inactivation has not yet been selected.

The announcement identified two National Guard and 18 Reserve units that are to be included in the withdrawal and will be inactivated when they reach the United States.

The National Guard units are the 650th Medical Detachment from Birmingham, Ma., and the 126th Supply and Service Company from Quincy, Ill.

The Army Reserve units are: The 978th Army Postal Unit, Fort Smith, Ark; 950th Postal Unit, Lexington, Ky.; 630th Transportation Company, Washington, Pa.; 305th Medical Detachment,

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Philadelphia; 737th Transportation Co., Yakima, Wash.; 310th Medical Detachment, New York; 378th Medical Detachment, Memphis, Tenn.; 1011th Supply and Service Co., Independence, Ky.

312th Medical Evacuation Hospital, Winston-Salem, N.C.; 472nd Medical Detachment, Rockville, Md.; 319th Transportation Co., Augusta, Ga.; 336th Ordnance Battalion, Little Rock, Ark.; 452nd General Supply Company, Worthington, Minn.

173rd Quartermaster Company, Greenwood, Miss.; 313th and its 889th, Medical Detachments, both from Richmond, Va.; 74th Medical Hospital, New York; and 311th Medical Hospital, Sharonsville, Ohio.

About 12,000 Army National Guardsmen and reservists are now serving in Vietnam.

While there was no confirmation, the withdrawal — announced by President Nixon on Midway Island June 8—may have begun. Elements of a Marine battalion arrived on Okinawa Monday. A Marine spokesman said only that they would undergo six to 10 weeks of rehabilitation and retraining.

There was speculation that the Leathernecks comprised the first group of the 8,000 3rd Division Marines scheduled for movement from Vietnam to Okinawa.

The Pentagon said those being brought home, before the end of August, "will move initially to an Army post near their home station for processing."

"Following this they will be moved to their home armory or reserve center for demobilization" the announcement said.

The first large withdrawal, an 800-man battalion of foot soldiers of the 9th Infantry's 2nd Brigade, is scheduled for the second week in July, the Pentagon said.

A spokesman said, however, that small advance parties preparing for the withdrawal undoubtedly would reach Okinawa and Hawaii sooner.

The disposition of the 1,200 Navy "Riverine" forces included in the withdrawal has not yet been determined.

The Pentagon said the troops being withdrawn to the continental United States would leave most of their equipment behind. Some of it will be turned over to Vietnamese troops.

The Marines going to Okinawa plan little or no change in unit membership. Okinawa as well as Vietnam is a "hardship" tour (13 months) in military terminology.

But in the troops being withdrawn to Hawaii and the continental United States, efforts will be made to shift membership to include those who have served longer and leave behind those who have been in Vietnam only a short time, officials said.

John Graham: "45 years ago today I was getting on a freedom bird coming back to the world! My heart pounds every time I think about it even today."

Joe Kaupa: I don't know if anyone would be interested but I plan on bringing to the reunion the original copies of the photos taken by the Air Force of the mortar, rocket and ground attack at Phan Rang on January 26th, 1969. They are 8X10 photos showing the damages of the base and recovered weapons from the NVA Sapper teams. I will alert you that they are some gruesome photo's that were taken of enemy bodies taken. Also there is a security police blotter that was typed the night of the attack of the action which is fading away after all these years as the night in question I was working in CSC as a comptroller when we were hit. Again I don't know if anyone is interested but it is part of the history of Phan Rang. If you would like to see them just look me up at the reunion as I know some people may not want to view them. I believe this attack was the largest ground attack ever on Phan Rang AB. I look forward to meeting all of you. Joe Kaupa 35th SPS, Panther Flt, 1968-1969

Chris Boles: I wonder if you were the guy that gave me those photos. It has been so long but I remember coming out of CSC and someone from the AF was taking photos of all the NVA laid out on a platform by the Armory and CSC taking photo's and of the recovered weapons and asking for a copy of the photos which that person brought to me a couple days day at CSC. Just can't remember names, Sorry Joe Kaupa.

David Knighton: As part of our Augmentee training we were shown the pictures of the bodies. They are not something most people would want to see but certainly show the reality of what happens in battles. Any false illusions to TV or Movie Wars are erased by the reality of what really happens in Combat. I saw an interview once of an Army Veteran, who was an adviser for a War movie, who was asked the difference between War and Movies. He said that when filming of the movie takes a break the Dead and

Luncheon Buffet
at the Charleston Club
(9 October 2015)

Tossed Garden Salad

Mixed greens with cucumber, cherry tomatoes, shredded carrots and dressing selection

Sliced Roast Beef with Gravy
Lemon Baked Sea Trout
Whipped Potatoes with Gravy
Corn O'Brien
Green Beans Almondine
Strawberry Shortcake
Dinner Rolls
Iced Tea & Coffee Service

Note: The busses for JB Charleston will leave the hotel at 7:30 A.M. instead of the previously published time of 8:00 A. M.



WISTOSKIS TRAIN RIDE WITH THE MARINES

Moody, Shoenick and I are in the revetment loading a B-57. We had been working shorthanded, just the three of us because Wistoski had gone back to Clark for a few days for some reason.

"Wistoskis...He's back"

It's about noon and here comes Wistoski walking up the ramp toward us. He's back. As he approaches he is laughing so hard he's holding his stomach and can hardly talk. He is dying to tell us the tale of his return trip. Here is my recollection of his tale:

He says he arrived back at Saigon and was looking for a way to get back to Phan Rang. Unable to find an available seat on a flight, he hears that there is a train that goes there. He checks it out and finds that is true and he secures himself a ride on it.

This train was a freight train delivering supplies to all the military camps along its route. This particular load was flat cars loaded with pallets of beer. It had Marines guarding it. So there he is riding along in the Sun on a railroad flat car, sitting on pallets of beer with three Marines having a blast. The Marines were real nice to him and they are all getting along fine and he's really enjoying the ride.

The train stops next to a small Army camp to unload. Standing there leaning against a wall are three Army guys. They commence to "harassing" the Marines. The altercation escalates and is getting nasty and Wistoski is getting real nervous. Finally one Marine who was carrying a pair of pliers in his fatigue pocket ended the harassment.

He pulled the pliers out of his pocket, grabbed one of the Army guys by his throat with one hand and slammed him up against the wall. He grabbed two of the guys' fingers with the pliers and began squeezing. With the guy screaming and begging for mercy the Marine yelled "Sh*t your pants boy! Sh*t your pants!". And he did!

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With his two friends standing there frozen in fear, the Marine made him actually crap in his pants before he would let him go. Wistoski said it stunk like hell. The train was ready to go, they hopped back on and laughed all the way to Phan Rang.

(This is really an unusual story! I knew there was some kind of train service in the vicinity of Phan Rang, but I never heard of anyone riding it before. Doug)

From here to there and back again. I will be leaving for Charleston this week with an intermediate stop in Alabama. Looking forward to renewing old acquaintances and making new ones.

See ya!

(This newsletter was compiled by [Douglas Severt](#), unattributed graphics and photographs by Douglas Severt. I try very hard not to repeat a story and if I do it might be from a different perspective or news source I will always site where that story has previously appeared.)