

I enjoyed reading the newsletters on the site.

VIET NAM 1967 / 1968: 12th Reconnaissance Intelligence Technical Squadron / 7th AF

I was stationed there Dec 1967 - Dec 1968 and worked in the 12th Reconnaissance Intelligence Technical Squadron (12th RITS) next to 7th AF HQ.

My job was to support the pilots with reconnaissance photos to support bombing missions by Fighter/Bomber aircraft.

The three photos of varying scale was provided to each pilot: 1. Target, 2. Aim (for getting aiming points), and 3. Area (large scale photo of area).

When the TET Offensive kicked off, I took my camera outside and photographed, using available light.

Well, after seeing the damage later at daylight, no more standing in the open to photograph a rocket attack.

I can confirm the story about the commanders not issuing M-16's to the troops and they were either locked in a conex or arms room and that is where they stayed.

I received two injuries during the rocket attacks, the first in February 1968 when a 122mm Rocket flew overhead and landed 50 feet away in the Helicopter area (soon there after another rocket hit the new beverage building "Red Horse" had built, at the BX).

I dove to the ground when I heard the whoosh overhead. Well the BVD's I was wearing did not protect me from the hard pack and gravel we called "dirt" at 3 am in the morning.

None of the rockets hit me but my belly slide into the ground took a lot of skin off.

Well, by noon, my uniform had attached to the wounds and I was off to the AF Medical Clinic next to the Mortuary where I was offered a Purple Heart (I refused and they serviced my needs).

The second injury was exiting the upstairs to get to the ground floor during the May 1968 Offensive.

As soon as I made it to the landing on the stairs outside of the building, a blinding flash of light was my key to jump the hand rail and get on the ground ASAP. That resulted with 30 days walking with crutches.

During the May Offensive, the attacks continued near the BX area, four of us were on the top landing watching the aircraft drop bombs and strafe enemy in the cemetery near the perimeter and listen to the massive gun battle.

Well, to our surprise, spent rounds hit the jet engine containers along the helicopter compound and slammed into the building missing all four of us.

I immediately retreated, to locate helmet and flak vest and put more barriers between the spent incoming rounds my warm body.

SECURITY POLICE AND AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER COMMUNICATIONS:

In the 12th RITS, we had a hand held radio that allowed our unit to monitor Security Police radio traffic.

I will always remember the Airman manning the main gate calling in a situation report and then asking advice.

MAIN GATE: Main gate is being engaged by enemy fire.

CONTROL: How many, how far away, can you get a clear shot.

MAIN GATE: See one man firing automatic weapon on our position, individual is 200 yards away, no I cannot return fire without hitting the woman and child the VC is using as a shield. What are your orders SARGE?

CONTROL: How far away are they now, can you get a clear shot

MAIN GATE: About 150 yards, no clear shot SARGE, can I return fire?

CONTROL: No, however when they are within 100 yards, take out the target and try not to kill the woman and child.

MAIN GATE: OK, with the mike keyed, hollered "RETURN FIRE."

MAIN GATE: Enemy is down.

Also we could monitor the Air Traffic Control communications with the pilots.

One of the AF pilot was flying ground support around the base and the RVNAF pilot was doing Flare drops in support of ground attack operations.

AF PILOT: Tower, tell the RVNAF pilot to stop dropping flares, he is dropping them in my line of flight.

TOWER: RVNAF pilot do not drop any more flares

RVNAF PILOT: OK Joe, No More Flares.

VIET NAM – THAILAND – CAMBODIA 1972 / 1973

Well in Aug 1972 – Feb 1973, I was back at Tan Son Nhut and initially assigned to the 12th RITS until they found out I was Air Intelligence vice Photo Intelligence.

It took them 30 days and then I started the long ride daily to MACV HQ where I served as the NCOIC of the TACAIR Targeting Shop.

Additional duties included MACV Perimeter Defense Force more often than I can remember.

The issue was drawing my weapon from the Air Force conex during normal duty hours so I could pull my guard duty, in one of the towers around MACV HQ.

After the AF Commander of the unit did his barracks inspection of the Ponderosa Barracks, north of the helicopter compound (BX was on south side of Helicopter compound), I was told an M-16 was not to be stored in my wall locker and to turn it in immediately after the inspection.

I explained the issue with my MACV Perimeter Defense Force duties required easy access to a weapon if the base is attacked, as I would have to hike to MACV immediately day or night.

Commander's response. You can check it out between 0800 - 1600.

When the rocket attack happened in Dec 1972, the Major and Captain saw me immediately grab my coffee cup, helmet and flax vest and take protection under my desk.

Their immediate response was to say, "What are you doing?"

I said, "we are under a rocket attack."

I said, "turn on the radio."

They did, and it said Base Alert, Condition Red, Take Cover, Take Cover and it was repeated again.

Out the door they ran.

When the "All Clear" was declared, I was back at my desk working when they returned.

I said, "First Time to Viet Nam? (Yep was their response)."

I said, I too was stupid once during my first tour, but quickly learned what not to do.

After closing the MACV complex in Feb 1973 and setting up operations in Thailand at NKP in the USAG HQ, I was soon thereafter put on a plane and set to Cambodia for 70 days.

The civilian clothes was a nice change of attire but the fine local food resulted in a loss of 46 pounds.

Upon returning and nearing the end of my year tour in SEA, I was put in for a Bronze Star for my time in Cambodia (when we weren't there).

Major Borts received the award application back with a comment that unless he could tell where I went and what I did, he would have to downgrade the award to a JSCM for what I did at MACV / USAG HQ.

I have tried to locate the two LT's and the Major to re-address the issue so I can get the award I deserved for service rendered.

Still trying to locate the service members I worked with but since I branched transferred from the Air Force to the Army to complete my military career, the search is ongoing.

James T. Brogdon