

CH-37 at Cam Rahn Bay

By [Ted Jenkins](#)

Before Cam Rahn Bay became Cam Rahn Bay as we knew it later, it was just a short PSP airstrip that a Caribou could get on and, of course, helicopters. Cam Rahn was filled with wild life. We would take a CH-37 down there and hover over the tall brush and flush out wild boar and deer and our Huey with a crewman with an M14 would nail them. Wild boar is delicious. We also got a deer which seemed as big as a horse. We would take them back to Nha Trang and CW2 Jess Gossage our resident rancher/farmer would dress them.

But I'm off the subject.

George Ellis and I drew a mission to fly about ten high ranking Air Force officers, MAJs, LTCs, COLs to Cam Rahn for their initial survey of Cam Rahn while it still looked like a jungle. I gave them their briefing and they finally belted up. All of them had cameras and all during the flight, I had to constantly wrestle with the cyclic, back and forth, back and forth. After a few minutes of this, I got on the intercom to the flight engineer and told him the flight controls were acting abnormally. Could he see anything wrong. He came back with, "Sir, I can't keep these damn people in their seats. They are going from front to back and side to side taking pictures. And one will call another and they all go to that spot. I can't get them to sit down." I told him to immediately inform them to get their butts in their seats and buckle up. Amazing how smoothly the rest of the flight went. As I mentioned in 1965, Cam Rahn only had a short PSP runway and rather than come to a hover with that many on board, I decided on a running landing. I came in about 50 knots, flared and planted the tail wheel and it bounced two or three times (pretty good bounces). Probably the worst running landing I had ever made. When we shutdown, several of the Air Force guys complemented me on that smooth landing. Made me wonder what kind of landings they were accustomed to. After about two hours on the ground they returned and informed me that since we still had daylight, did I know where Phan Rang was and could we go there to see how that air base was looking. "Yes sir," I replied, "no problem." This time they all sat down, buckled up and were ready. After making sure they were secure, I reached under the forward seats and put on a flak vest and passed one up to CWO Ellis, and the flight crew also donned their vests. Eyes began to roam. Then the Major asked, "why are you putting on those vests?" I just replied, "Sir, the clouds are low and to get to Phan Rang we have to go through that pass over there," and I pointed it out, "and usually Charlie was sitting up there with a .50 cal." Immediately, all of them unbuckled and huddled at the rear of the cargo compartment for a conference. A lot of discussion was taking place. It was sort of funny. The Major then came back to the front and told us that they really didn't need to see Phan Rang today. They could do it another time. CWO Ellis was up in the cockpit listening and he began to laugh. They couldn't see him. So we took off our vests, I stowed them under the front seats, climbed up into the cockpit, smiled at George, cranked up and left for Nha Trang and an early beer. I had many humorous experiences in Vietnam but this one always ranks near the top.