1970 VMA-141 incident at Tent City - MCAS, Cherry Point.

On our deployment there, the enlisted Marines and non-Staff NCOs were housed in what was called **Tent City**. This area was large enough to hold at least four squadrons. There were two dirt roads that separated the eight-man tent areas for each squadron along with an outdoor head and shower facility. You needed to bring a field mirror to shave. Our tent was on the main dirt road with the rest of the squadron behind us. **A pain in the butt squadron** was directly across from us. Starting on Monday morning after our arrival this squadron held morning PT at 5.30 hours for 45 minutes.

In my tent was our duty section Sergeant and 5 more experienced plane captains. We had been together for years and were a tight group. That year VMA-131 set a record with around 700 flight hours. Our squadron at the time was flying very old A4Bs. Everyone in Port and Starboard duty sections were exhausted after their twenty - hour duty shifts which were required to keep the old birds flying day and night.

There were rain showers on and off for two weeks which caused mud puddles around Tent City. On the Monday of our second week everyone was dragging ass. The Squadron, (probably a Helo one) across from us began their PT, and during a moment of silence , loud shouting comes from behind our tent, “Stop playing Marines” followed by four, six and twelve letter adjectives, verbs and nouns such as ass wipes, numb nuts , dumbasses etc., **in short Marine speak.** Their PT leader ran across the road past our tent yelling ”who said that, I am going to have your ass”? Suddenly there was a momentary silence and shuffling of feet beside our tent. The PT leader is thrown through the air **and lands in a large mud puddle**. Everyone in our tent tenses in anticipation of retaliation but, nothing happens! One of our tent mates who always had an appropriate remark said ”I guess they don’t like him either”

We all look at each other and our Sergeant says “ quickly field day our tent, we are going to chow hall before the shit hits the fan!! We enjoyed a long breakfast , killed some more time and reported to the flight line at 12:00 hours to begin duty shift. We found out a couple of hours later that the Marine in the mud puddle **was their Sergeant Major,** and that our squadrons tents had been inspected with more than a few of them written up for beer and booze. We fell silent and never say another word about the incident. Surprisingly, nothing seem to happen.

On Thursday afternoon, first hop, Gunny yells that our former CO is walking to his A4. So, out goes his plane captain (PC).

Since the first morning the PC joined VMA-131 he was the Lt Col’s PC (Story for another time).

The Lt Col had flown in WWII and Korea and saw no need to preflight his aircraft and didn’t, as he told the PC on their first fay in no uncertain terms , the preflight is your job!

Usually, while the rest of the pilots are pre flighting their A4s, the Lt. Col and PC killed some time talking about everything and **sometimes about the Squadron.** And then the Lt. Col would climb the ladder to the cockpit.

As the PC hurried from the line shack to the Lt.Col ‘s Skyhawk, he had a feeling! When he arrived the Lt Col, said “ **we need to talk** about what happened Monday morning to the Sergeant Major. We usually know by now who did it but this time total silence! He looked at the PC Who Suggs and said “I don’t know anything” He gets a look followed by, don’t give me that BS, you always know what is going on. The PC replies, I really don’t know who did it . The Lt.Col, said: “ let me put it this way. When I return from this hop, I am going to see the Station Commanding General along with the CO. We have nothing to say that can help the Squadron!! PCs replies, Ooaa, I’ll tell you what I can swear too, I know for a fact that no one from **VMA-131 laid a hand** or even a finger on that Sergeant Major; **however**, there were Marines in the tent behind us that did.

The Lt. Col. looks at the PC and shakes his head. His PC does the same. The Lt Col. turns, climbs the ladder to the cockpit after which the PC handed the Lt. Col. the ejection seat safety pin pouch. The Lt. Col. said ”I’m thinking I am proud of our squadron; I know how to handle this.

**We never heard another thing about the incident.**

Source, the involved Plane Captain.

PS. For those of you who can’t figure out what happened, continue reading. When a reserve squadron deploys an experienced active duty MARTD\* Marine from each supporting shop travels with us. They help with difficult problems and are usually career Marines. We were going to take the blame for them.

Last comment, I have no idea what my Lt.Col. said to diffuse the situation but he did. Also, this was not the first time he bailed us out of trouble.

At the time, former COs could remain in squadron. Regulations have since changed and this no longer happens. I understand why but they had so much experience to share.

\*Marine Aviation Reserve Training Detachment.