



## The Barracks of South-East Asia (SEA) Bases

At Da Nang AB, the CSC Radio Operator would give a "India Poppa Tango Alpha" (It's Party Time Again) radio message at the end of Tiger's Flight Shift (the midnight shift). Dog handlers were often considered to be a rowdy group. I never thought of us as being rowdy, maybe the politically correct thing to say would be "disciplinary challenged). But dog handlers do know how to party.

By 1968, Security Police lived in a compound between the base headquarters compound and the main AF compound. Originally, the Squadron lived in tents, but we lived in old barracks that had been built by the French. We went out on patrol at night and worked along side Marines, but came back in the morning to the infamous luxuries of the Air Force side of the base. The section had two huts allotted for handlers to live in. Handlers lived in one of two huts. One hut was for the party crowd, the other for the more sedate handlers. The party-hut had a "get together" every morning. A few drinks (the definition of a few drinks varied for some of the guys!) and we would hit the rack and attempt to sleep until the heat of the day and aircraft noise woke us up. We would go have our evening meal in the chow hall, then started getting ready for posting. Our weapons were kept in our wall lockers, at least until a SP shot up the NCO hut. The gunplay took place in the hut, next door to the K-9 partying hut (Hut # 6). An armory was quickly (late 69) built thereafter, and we had to turn in all our weapons and check them in and out.

By late 1969, most airmen lived in open bay barracks. Most barracks were divided up into cubes consisting of a pair of bunk beds facing two metal wall lockers. Industrious individuals attempted to scrounge or make furniture to fit into the space between the lockers. Plywood was almost impossible to find and seldom seen in the barracks. Of course we had a source for plywood and other lumber. One of our dog posts bordered on a supply yard that contained lumber. So needless to say, our huts were finished a little nicer in our quarters from recovered stuff dropped by those thieving Viet Cong. We had walls between cubes and wood flooring over the concrete slab. The floors raised us above the "high tide" caused by monsoon flooding.

A new base commander decided that all the barracks should be changed back to the open bay design and ordered the "cubes" removed. Of course, the Security Police Squadron Commander was the first to jump on it. All the other units dragged their feet. Our Commander directed all cubes removed within a week! Every hut started tearing down the cubes a little bit every day. Except the K-9 Party Hut . . . we had a few drinks every morning and watched everyone else tear down their cubes. Everyone had worked so hard to have a little piece of the world in the form of a cube. When the last morning arrived, we held probably the most destructive K-9 party ever. Well, they did order us to tear down the cubes.

You know what happens when you tell a dog handler to destroy something. Non-dog handlers walking past the doors paused to watch the festivities. Soon lumber, beer cans, and liquor bottles were being ejected out the door in a contest. Our version of "mine is bigger" was changed to "I can throw my cube farther than you can throw yours." Complaints were made to the proper authorities, in reference to irreverent comments and actions being observed. Law Enforcement (Security Police) responded but only peeked in through the open doors. One handler (unnamed to protect the guilty) sang loudly as he sat atop the revetment surrounding the hut. He taunted non-canine-types by betting them \$20 they couldn't make it unscathed through the hut and out the other end! No one took him up on the bet. The irreverent crooner was also the obvious source of rude comments to anyone passing near his revetment post. The First Sergeant, who happened to have bright red hair and no sense of humor, responded to restore order. This handler sang him a little song at maximum volume in a slurred voice that was not well received by the First Sergeant. Its more polite lyrics (this is a family page) consisted of, "I'd rather be dead . . . than red in the head . . . like the \*\*\*\* on a dog . . . woof, woof." I was told the performance was rather well received by everyone else. The First Sergeant did not have any sense of humor at all, according to bystanders. I don't remember too much of what occurred at the end of the party (don't read too much into that), except the song became a new standard (at least out of the First Sergeant's hearing).

When the hungover dog handlers started waking up in the late afternoon, the current Kennelmaster, SSgt Frederick Doctor, met us. He was moving into the hut as ordered by a

certain individual whose hair matched his anger at the disrespectful dog handlers. He informed us that we were in need of close supervision. The kennel master was not pleased to leave the comforts of the NCO hut and being forced to live with us. We were severely chastised for his embarrassment caused by our actions. Our response was to wake him with a welcome party the next morning when we returned from post. Alcoholic beverages were not banned from the barracks area. I guess that the powers-to-be preferred our parties held in the compound instead of the Airmen's Club. Oh, by the way, the Base Commander canceled his order to tear down the cubes. We never returned the hut to its previous glory.



Upper Left Photo: Tent City, Barracks Area for all enlisted  
Circa 1965 Photo by Don Poss

The Security Police eventually moved into barracks built years before by the French. The "new" barracks were open bay on a cement slab. During monsoon rains the barracks would have several inches of water covering the floors. We built up the floor with lumber, keeping our belongings above "High Tide".



The Infamous K-9 Hut # 6 at Da Nang: Decorated for Christmas 1968  
Photo by Greg Dunlap

In the early 70's Cam Ranh Bay AB quarters for airmen in transit were tents with wood floors. Two story wood frame barracks were built at many of the bases replacing tents. Electricity service at most bases depended greatly on the local electric service. Most bases had diesel generators that provided service to mission essential areas of the base. Needless to say, barracks were not a high priority. At Da Nang AB (circa 68-69) the one latrine in the SP compound was on the base power grid. The barracks in the compound were on the city power grid, subject to many outages.



Two story barracks were not popular. During rocket or mortar attacks the upper floors could only be describes as death traps. Any close impacts would allow shrapnel thru the exterior walls. Direct hits could kill or wound everyone in the barracks. Sand bags were often stacked around the exterior walls to protect from shrapnel, but this would only protect the lower bay. Occupants of the upper floors had to literally run for their lives to reach shelter. Rockets used by the Viet Cong were not the long range weapons (Scuds) used in the Gulf War. The rockets used in SEA had a range of a few miles. It was told that at Da Nang bunkers had been removed as ordered by a previous base commander when it was felt that mortar attacks were no longer a threat. Then the VC started to strike with 122mm and 140mm rockets. Warning time was limited to a few seconds, if you saw the blast on the horizon. At some bases, watch towers were tasked with giving a verbal warning over the radio.

Photo Below: New Barracks under construction at Udorn Royal Thai Air Base.  
Photo Courtesy of Glenn Eckfeld.



Photos Below: The barracks area at Udorn Royal Thai (RTAB) Air Base during monsoon floods Circa Early 70's. Yes, snakes were a major concern during "high tides". Cobras, Kraits, and Vipers would migrate to all high areas above the water. Photos Courtesy of Ernest Childers





Photo Below: Barracks at Bien Hoa AB, RVN



[E Mail the K-9 Webmaster](#)

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