

Account of the Da Nang AB Sapper Attack, July 1, 1965



Submitted by: **Bob Potter, Vestal, NY**
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I am sending in *Stars & Stripes* (Air Edition) from 2JUL65 (the day after the sapper attack) which I cut out and kept, describing the attack on Da Nang. It states in the opening that one Air Policeman, standing guard near the south end of the field, was killed when the suicide squad sprayed his post with small arms fire. I was surprised at how yellow the headline article came out. Guess something 43 years old is going to show it's age. *Not like you and I!*

Also have some pictures from the *Bangkok Post* of the damaged and destroyed aircraft. Since these are old newspaper articles and obviously in delicate condition, I will send a copy. I don't have a scanner and am new to the computer. Also, have not gotten to my slides out yet as job search is "Number One" at the present time. By the way, my best buddies are Marines and am looking forward to possibly becoming an associate member of their local shooting team.

My *Club Cards* I had laminated last year as they were getting pretty frayed. I was surprised at how yellow the headline article came out since I asked to have it done in color because of the *Stars and Stripes* on the front. Guess something 32 years old is going to show it's age. Not like you and I! Have no aerial pictures of the Air Base, just some of the coast and villages we flew over during takeoff. Was on the site this afternoon enjoying the pictures since they were so familiar. You really have done a great job on the Web Site! Wife and I were at fellow Viet Vet's home this evening for a swim and that sort of did us in.

Robert C. Potter



Suicide Unit Hits Da Nang

(Continued From Page 1)

south end of the airstrip at about 1:30 a.m. From a position between the base and the southern limits of the defense perimeter, the guerrillas poured about 30 rounds of 81mm shells onto the edge of the runway.

The suicide squad fled when American crewmen scrambled from their tents and trailers surrounding the aircraft.

At the same time the suicide squad was cutting through the tangled barbed wire defenses of the base, another Viet Cong squad penetrated within two miles of the base and unleashed the barrage of mortar rounds.

Most of the mortar fire landed beyond the airplane parking area. And at least a dozen rounds hit the runway.

Damage from the mortar fire was called "minimal" and did not put the vital base out of operation.

As the squad touched off the grenades they sprayed the area with automatic weapons and small arms fire.

One eyewitness said he saw about six Viet Cong running back toward the barbed wire after the attack was over.

There was no immediate indication of whether any of the Viet Cong infiltrators were killed.

Reports of shooting around the fighting line tallied with reports of shadowy figures running away from the plane park.

A Marine spokesman said Viet Cong troops were responsible for the sector of the perimeter in which the Viet Cong set up their mortars.

American airmen risked their lives to race in a mawk the blazing aircraft. They hauled a number of Delta Daggers to safety with two tractors.

The base, 395 miles north of Saigon, is used by the U.S. Air Force for many of the bombing raids against communist north Vietnam and for support attacks against Viet Cong ground raids in the area. The base and the nearby city of Da Nang have been protected since March by the 3d U.S. Marine Amphibious Force, which numbers about 15,000 men.

Marine mortars answered the communist mortar fire soon after it began. Spotter planes flew overhead, dropping flares in an attempt to locate the enemy.

Marine patrols hurried out beyond the perimeter. All roads in and around the town were closed and police and troops patrolled the streets.

All personnel were evacuated from the southern end of the runway as soon as the planes were hauled to safety. None were permitted back into the area because it was feared bombs aboard the damaged aircraft might explode.

Two of the American wounded were members of A Det., 509th Fighter Interceptor Sq. They were cut by flying glass when explosions blew out the windows of the trailers in which they were sleeping.

The three other wounded were marines.

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VIET CONG SHELL TIGHTLY GUARDED U.S. AIRBASE

Da Nang suicide raid

\$5 MILLION DAMAGE TO US AIRCRAFT

DA NANG, Vietnam, Thursday

A small communist suicide squad raced into the vital Da Nang a.r base early today and used hand grenades to destroy three American planes.

Under cover of a mortar barrage, the Viet Cong killed one air policeman and damaged several planes. Five other Americans were wounded slightly during the attack.

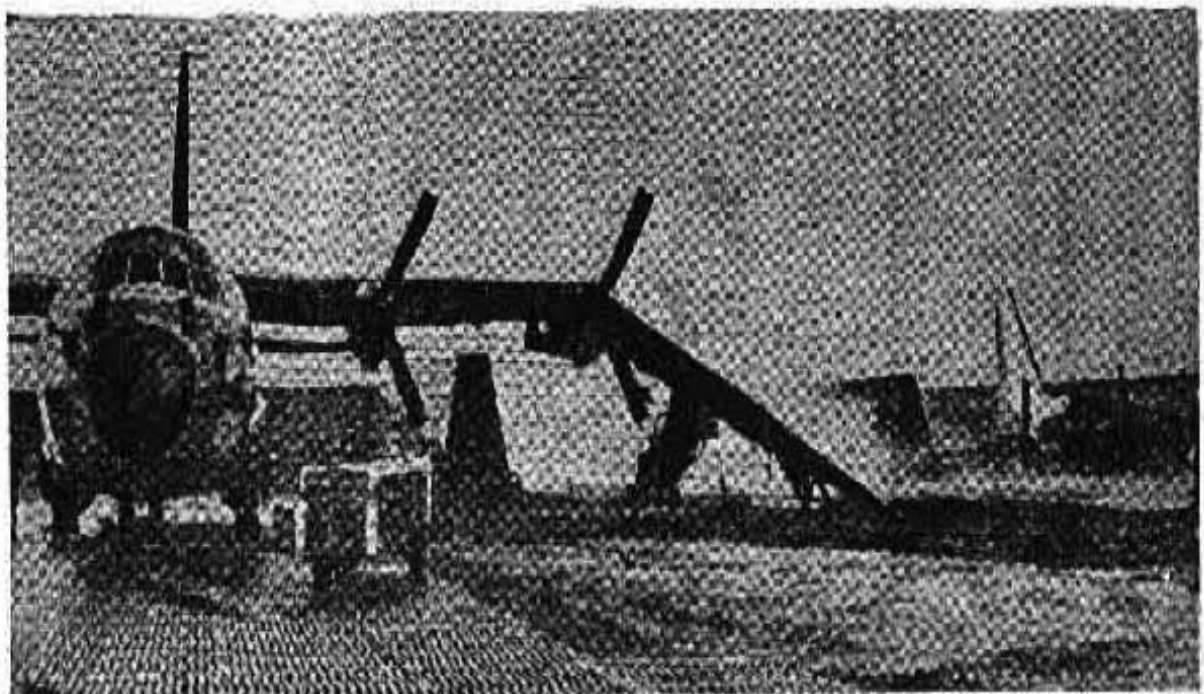
The air policeman, standing guard near the south end of the field, was killed when the squad sprayed his post with small arms fire.

The attackers destroyed two US Air Force C-130 Hercules transport planes and one F 102 jet fighter. One other Hercules transport and two other F-102s were damaged.



VIET CONG SURPRISE ATTACK ON DA NANG AB DESTROYED F-102 DELTA DAGGER (FOREGROUND).

ACTION: Da Nang



THE BROKEN WING OF A C-130 TRANSPORT RESTS ON GROUND AFTER VIET CONG ATTACK ON DA NANG AB. TAIL (RIGHT) IS ALL THAT IS LEFT OF SECOND C-130.



A U.S. SOLDIER RUNS PAST A DESTROYED F-102 AFTER VIET CONG RAID ON DA NANG.

MORTAR FIRE

American authorities at first believed the planes had been destroyed by the mortar fire. But investigation proved the Viet Cong squad penetrated the much-vaunted defenses of the base to pitch their grenades.

Sirens at the base wailed as soon as the first mortar hit the south end of the airstrip at about 1:30 a.m.

From a position between the base and the southern limits of its defence perimeter, the guerrillas poured 27 rounds of 81mm shells onto the edge of the runway.

The squad withdrew while American crewmen scrambled from their tent and trailers surrounding the aircraft.

The mortars landed with deadly accuracy, disintegrating one Delta Dagger jet. Cockpits on the other two jets were damaged heavily.

Some 25 US pilots and crewmen were sleeping in trailers and tents near the planes at the tip of the base's 10,000 foot long runway. Two of the pilots were reported injured by flying glass.

TURMOIL

The mortar attack threw the base into a state of turmoil. Most personnel within the base were sleeping, but maintenance crews were awake. Flares lit up the sky most of the night over the base as reconnaissance planes buzzed the sky on the lookout for possible enemy troop movements.

Only 90 miles (144km) from the North Vietnamese border the base has been considered a prime target of the Viet Cong since the United States began air strikes against North Vietnam in February. The base is located about two miles (3.2 km) from Da Nang city, South Vietnam's second largest city with a population of 150,000.

SWEEP

US Marines and Vietnamese forces launched a big sweep at dawn through the area from which the mortar fire appeared to have come.

Four of the jets escaped damage, and were moved to the centre of the runway during the early morning. Within four and one half hours after the barrage, three new F102 jets were flown to Da Nang as replacements.