



# **Đà Nẵng Air Base** **SAPPERS & MORTARS** **ATTACK**

**July 1, 1965**

**AL HANDY, A1C**

**by: Mike Bush (MSgt.Ret.)**  
USAF Security Police, 23rd ABG/AP

*We were among the first Air Cops that had been to Nam and come back, we were treated like "lepers" by the rest of the Squadron!*

Email: *We had a request from the AFSFA looking for info on an AP [Al] last name Handy (TDY from George AFB) that was supposed to have killed the sapper that killed Terry Jensen. Of course, the VSPA would like to find this individual as well. [Al Handy is now a VSPA member, and was TDY from the 831st APS to Đà Nẵng in 1965] Did you know Handy and can you put something on the Web about trying to find him?*

*On another note, if you think you might use the second story [this one] I sent you I would like to review it one more time prior to publication. I've done some additional research on the KIA's since I submitted the story to you and may wish to amend it somewhat? Thanks for all you are doing. I've been reading the comments you have been getting. I concur completely with all the good things people have had to say about your Web site.*

*Later, Mike Bush*

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**Airman Al Handy was TDY from George AFB, and had been in country about a week.** A then friend of mine, an A1C Joseph (can't remember the first name), who was part of the Response Force, but some distance from where I was, related the following to me:

### **A1C Joseph:**

As we swept down the taxiway, Handy came running and stumbling toward our group shouting his name. When he reached us, he said that he was out of ammunition, and wanted to get more! According to A1C Joseph, Handy was really a mess, and could barely talk coherently. At some point, Handy was transported back to the compound, and OSI grabbed him to debrief him about the death of SSgt Jensen.

***Now here is the part that nobody talks about*** -- In traditional fashion, the OSI tried to play "HANG THE COP"!! The first "theory" that the OSI came up with was that Handy had "panicked" and shot SSgt Jensen by mistake! I am proud to say that I "shot holes" in that theory!! A couple of days later, an OSI puke, contacted me in the armory and showed me four pieces of 7.62 X39 brass, and asked me to I.D. it. I immediately I.D.'d the brass, as the type used with the AK-47 assault rifle. The OSI person then told me that was the brass they had picked up near SSgt Jensen's body, and then he related: "Well, I guess that gets Handy off the hook." The OSI agent then coldly tossed SSgt Jensen's .38 cal. revolver on the armory work bench, and said: "Here - you might want to clean that up!" It was completely caked with SSgt Jensen's blood.

After the OSI agent left, I picked up Terry's .38, and opened the cylinder to check it. It was still loaded. Three rounds had been fired. I detailed stripped the weapon, and cleaned it thoroughly then I put it aside in the armory. Later that same day, I asked the Operations Sergeant (TSgt Herbert Steer), if there was any way that we could send Terry's weapon to his family as a keep-sake. I was told to "forget it." The weapon was returned to the inventory, and reissued as far as I know, upon seeing the gore, his eyes rolled back in his head, and he went "catatonic." He was air evaced out the next day (don't know where to).

**I heard a few days later that they had put Handy in for the Bronze Star w/V, but I don't know if he ever got it. Many of us were put in for decorations, but most of the paperwork ended up in the trash can. I remember pulling mine out of the trash and reading it! I was so numb about the whole event that I didn't even care! I guess that even then, it was not "politically expedient" for lower ranking Cops to get medals. As we used to say: "That's okay - It don't mean Nuthin - Never did - Never Will!"**

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### **Background on what some APs were doing at Đà Nẵng AB off duty:**

Like SSgt Jensen, many of us were very upset about the way the war was being fought, and especially how we (USAF Air Police) were being used. The Air Force used to send teams of Air Police out to secure the crash sites where those USAF Firebee reconnaissance drones crashed after they got the hell shot out of them while flying up North, and over Laos and Cambodia.

1. **Photo: C-130** takes off carrying two USAF Firebee reconnaissance AQM-34 drones.



**2. Photo: USAF Firebee Reconnaissance AQM-34 Drone**  
and precursors of contemporary unmanned aerial systems.



**3. Photo (right):**  
*China developed the CH-1 by reverse-engineering and heavily-modified replica of a captured USAF AQM-34N Firebee drones recovered during the Vietnam War.*



In Vietnam, the Air Force did not equip Air Police properly [in 1965], did not provide us with communications gear that would even reach the Base, and most of the time CSC [Central Security Control] did not even know (or care) that there were AP troops in the field on an operation! We could have all been killed, and the Squadron would probably have marked us AWOL! What a mess!

Those of us who went out on those Ops regularly, scrounged enough field gear, extra ammo, grenades, and tactical communications equipment so as to be able to survive out there, and hopefully get back on our own, or by the good graces of the Army chopper pilots (God Bless those guys!). We had plenty of "contact" on those ops, and put in our time "in the bush."

You would not believe some of the things that Air Cops were involved in, and did on their "own time"! We were strictly forbidden and threatened with court martial if we were caught taking part in any "unauthorized" activity. Well, that just "lit the fuse" with some of us, and we went out at every opportunity, doing anything that would get us a chance to get a crack at "Charlie"!



**Terry Jensen, and another troop named *Brandenburg*** \* (first name not remembered) used to fly as door gunners regularly on the old HH-34 choppers with the Vietnamese!! Boy you talk about a "death wish" Those two were really nuts! I remember once when they "got back," Terry had been nicked by a slug in the upper left arm. Not a serious wound, but nonetheless, a wound! To get treatment, he had to go over to the Vietnamese hospital, and slip the doctors there "beucoup piasters" to treat him and not report the injury! If he had gone to the USAF dispensary, he would have been investigated, charged, and would have undoubtedly gone to jail! Yup, it was a wonderful war! Go figure! I flew as a door gunner on the Army choppers myself several times.

The Army didn't give a damn, and it gave some of their troops a break! Everybody was happy... we got our "action time" and the Army got extra bodies! Nobody said anything, and the Air Force was none the wiser. But - we received no flight pay, several of the guys had enough missions for an Air Medal which they never got, and a couple of them had to really argue and plead like hell to keep the Army from putting them in for decorations for some of the absolutely heroic things that they did while flying on those "illegal" missions! Got real sticky there a couple of times! I accompanied Marine Corps Force Recon units of Ops west of Hill 327, over in "happy valley"! I went on ops with Special Forces a couple of times (damn near got my ass shot off on one of those - and still have a hearing problem in my left ear that I could never report). We had guys that flew as gunners on the those old HH-43 twin bladed choppers with Air Rescue and who were "on the ground" up North with the P.J.'s looking for Pilots that had bailed out!

On one op, a P.J. named "Silvers" wanted to put the Cop in for a medal because he stood his ground and laid down heavy suppressive fire that kept the NVA at bay, while the P.J. recovered the injured Pilot! The P.J. was awarded the Silver Star for that "save" - the Cop was never there!

Some of us knew that the Base was going to be hit 30 days before it happened. How did we know? Because we went out there beyond the wire on unauthorized patrols, and found all kinds of "sign." We found foot prints right up to the concertina wire that showed that they were practicing the infiltration! One night we watched them digging one of the mortar pits!

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\* **From:** John Fox [tuyhoajohn@charter.net](mailto:tuyhoajohn@charter.net) [<mailto:tuyhoajohn@charter.net>]  
**Subject:** Report on Jensen's Death

*One of the principals mentioned in this investigation is Mike Bush. He mentions an individual named **Brandenburg**, but has no first name. I was thinking it might have Walt Brandenburg. We were at Hamilton AFB in 1972 and 1973, and closed it down in Dec 1973. Walt was a fellow vet (there were only four on a flight of over forty cops). He was a slender guy with a blonde short crew-cut, and wore his fatigues tight to his body. He had a few years on me and I know he hailed from the Visalia, CA area. Lost touch after Hamilton, but it sure seems possible. Could be another avenue. **John Fox.***

Troops on town patrol were getting Intel from the bar girls, and shoeshine boys that something big was going to happen at the Base! Nobody would listen, and nobody wanted to hear it! Cops weren't suppose to be smart enough to do those kinds of things! OSI was worthless: They had no ground intelligence capability whatsoever, they didn't liaison effectively with Army Intel, and all they were interested in was catching G.I.s selling cigarettes and booze [and U.S. currency] on the black market! They put their heads in the sand and kept them there!

I had three pretty rough years after I got back from Nam. Six of us went to Lowry AFB Colorado upon reassignment, and out of the six, one killed himself, and one went to jail for murder! It was really odd. Among the six of us that were in Nam together, we hardly spoke to each other when we were at Lowery! It was like none of us wanted to remind each other of what we had been through! Since we were among the first Cops that had been to Nam and come back, we were treated like "lepers" by the rest of the Squadron! They said that we were all "crazy", and "killers", and really walked on eggs around us! It was really strange! All we wanted was just to be treated like everybody else.

I can remember several hearing muffled remarks from my own Flight Chief to others saying, ***"Don't mess with Bush, he's one of those Vietnam Crazyies."*** I will never forget how I laughed until I cried when he got his orders to Saigon! Boy, you talk about being "white around the mouth"! That guy stuck to me like glue for the rest of the time that he was there trying to pump me for information about *"what to expect when he got to Nam"*! You can just guess how much help I was to him!

Thanks to a GREAT lady that I married, I made it through the post-Vietnam problems (we are going on 31 years together now)! I stayed in for 22 years, and retired in 1980. Staying in helped me "cope" with the experience. I trained troops to stay alive in combat. When the SPECS program finally was established, I was able to contribute significantly to its development, and at last Air Force Security Police finally received the training and equipment that they needed to function as a first-class fighting force! (I understand that all of that was been done away with and that the Cops were almost right back where they were prior to Vietnam! I guess they even changed the name and now call them "Security Forces" instead of Security Police! What's that all was about?

While I was in, I went to eight years of night school, earned two college degrees, and graduated from the FBI National Academy (113th Session). I kept one foot in the civilian community, and successfully "packaged" myself for a job on the outside after retirement. Nine days after I hung up the blue suit (or Cammies in my case), I went to work as Security Director at an R&D facility in Ann Arbor Michigan. The CO was a DOE contractor, doing research in inertial confinement laser fusion. I spent two years there, then landed a job as head of physical security with EG&G Energy Measurements Inc. in Las Vegas Nevada. EG&G was a prime contractor to the US Department of Energy in support of Nevada Test Site Operations.

I built up the Physical Security section into the Physical/Technical Security Department, and had 17 people working for me including two Electrical Engineers. When Operations Security became Big in 1988, I did a lateral transfer to a Staff position, and worked in developing and implementing the DOE Nevada Operations Operations Security (OPSEC) Program. Had a lot of fun, and my DOE counterpart got awards for the best OPSEC program in DOE, and the best in the Federal System for 1980!

I did a stint in Albuquerque as Task Manager for a contract start-up operation for Review Evaluation and Inspection of Nuclear Production Facilities, and other DOE facilities, and once that was off the ground, I decided that I had had enough of the Stress and BS that goes with jobs at that level! In short, It just wasn't fun anymore! I am now semi-retired (although I still do consultant work and technical writing for DOE whenever I feel like it), and I have a nice little nobrainer security job with the Nevada Power CO here in Las Vegas! Once in awhile, I will write something "spectacular" for my "Boss" and make him famous! He, in-turn, lets me pretty much do anything that I want to do, and I have a lot of fun! I will never go back to the "Corporate mind grinder" again! Don't need it - Don't want it! We have everything that we need, and I will just kick back and putts along until I can draw from my little Annuity fund when I'm 59 and a-half, and then I think that we may take a cruise around the world or something like that!

If you ever get over to Las Vegas give me a call! We can get together and hoist a couple of brews in memory of those who didn't "make it back", including the ones that are still alive!

I knew that SSgt. Jensen had one daughter that was an SP, but I didn't know that he had two! I had heard that one of them was stationed out here at Nellis when my EG&G office was out there. Never tried to find her, but I would have liked to talked to her/them about their father. I could tell them some stories!

Take Care!

Mike Bush (MSgt., Retired)

*We Take Care of Our Own*