



Đà Nẵng AB, 1 July 1965: C-130s Destroyed by Sappers!

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[Mike Bush, \(MSgt, USAF Security Police - Retired\) :](#)

In the light of the burning aircraft, the NVA could be seen dragging dead and wounded toward the fence line.

USAF Air Crew and personnel: The NVA were also engaged by the F-102 crew members and maintenance personnel in the tent area, who were lightly armed with a few *unauthorized* M16's and hand weapons.

The Marines, from the aviation battalion, also contributed effective fire from their positions across the active runway to the west.

[In 1965, there was only a single runway, with one under construction.]

[ACCOUNT OF USAF, Ron Yates \(Captain\) :](#)

At night on 1 July 1965, the VC launched an attack on Đà Nẵng (their first attack ever... I believe... on a major US Air Base). This attack was directed at our Detachment since we were on alert on the end of the runway and isolated from the main USMC defenses of the Base. The attack started with 81mm mortars and then VC ground troops overran our position. They threw satchel charges into the tents and under the aircraft. All of our living quarters and ground equipment were destroyed and we lost seven F102's and four C-130 flare ships. The Marines set up a defensive perimeter between us and the main Base. They *counted us off* and opened up heavy fire on the VC forces at our position. I gained a new respect for USMC firepower from the receiving end! We had several casualties and one KIA. On that night, I was VERY glad for the *small arms training* we had at Buckley our doolie year!

[ACCOUNT OF USMC, Enrique B. del Rosario :](#)

More explosions racked
the C-130s, illuminating
the area. Two snapping

sounds above my head caused me to try to move into the trench where Newton had gone but suddenly fire came from my right. I knew that that was the area where a grunt CO was billeted and also a couple of Ontos anti-tank tracked vehicles were situated so I figured that it was friendly-fire that we were receiving. Still it made me mad to have fire directed at me.



Newton and I were looking for targets and we saw *two silhouetted figures running through the enflamed C-130s*, but at that distance we couldn't tell whether they were friend or foe.

I told Newton to stay in the trench and I was going to run back to the tent to alert everyone of the attack, but before I could move more than a few steps tracers swept past me -- coming from the Marines of the grunt CO. I hit the deck fast. The whole CO, it seemed, suddenly had opened fire into the night, firing into the flames, into the darkness, at Newton and me.

Finally, I had enough. I had to get back to the squadron to give the warning, so I jumped up on my feet and yelled as loud as I could, "Hold your fire! Hold your fire, goddammit! We're Marines over here!" Now I'm not sure that those trigger happy shooters actually heard me and complied with my cease fire order but it seemed to me that there was a pause in the shooting long enough to allow me to race back to the tent area.

I ran through the tent area yelling, "***Attack! Attack! We're under attack!***" I reached the officers' tents first and some came stumbling out wearing nothing but their skivvies and armed with their .38 revolvers. As more men came out of their tents I pointed to the direction of the fire that Newton and I had received. Most of the men had their M-14 rifles and were placing themselves in the trenches. Bert Goodfellow came stumbling out of his tent, pulling on his trousers while trying to hold on to his rifle, and complaining that I was too loud and over reacting.

First Sergeant Howard Force was all over the tent area organizing the ground defense, placing machine gun crews in their firing positions, dispersing the men and officers in a 360-degree defensive perimeter. After a while we could hear the NCOs of the grunt CO yelling for their troops to hold their fire.

For the first five minutes of the attack fire discipline among the grunts was bad.

Captain Frain slept through the entire attack. [delrosario]

I had originally thought it was Private Hughey who was with me on the night of the attack, but at the HMM-365 reunion in San Diego, August 2000, Glen Newton told me it was him instead. Also he told me that I yelled "Hold your fire! We're Americans over here!"

ACCOUNT OF A1C Handy :

During the whole attack and battle the SAT vehicle [*armed only with .38s and M16s. No body armor*] tried to reach us, and SSgt Bush was part of that team. *The first time* they caught heavy-fire and turned around and left, *the second time* the same thing happened, but *the third time* they made it all the way and I rolled out the back of the fox hole and ran down a drainage ditch between the taxiway and active runway yelling my last name hoping they wouldn't shoot me.

I know the SAT Team showed a lot of courage and should have been recognized for it. I don't know if they received any recognition or not, but I believe with all my heart that I would have been killed out there if they hadn't come to help when they did.

ACCOUNT OF A2C Tom Winn:

If the door of the vehicle SSgt Jensen was driving hadn't jammed, he might have had time to exit and take cover in the culvert next to the sentry post.

ACCOUNT OF A1C Handy :

When I got to the SAT vehicle all I could think of was I needed more ammo -- *I didn't get any.*

At the beginning of that shift, while being posted, we passed a group (4-5) of Marines huddled in a circle just before you get to the Liquid Oxygen Plant. Never saw one during the battle. I have no idea what actions they took during the base penetration or while the sappers blew up several aircraft, killed SSgt Jensen and got in a firefight with me.

I don't know if anyone else shot at the enemy.

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