



## Đà Nang Air Base Sappers Mortars Attack,

2 Jul 1965

## THE DAY AFTER

Roger Pile © 2012 by  
Captain (LTC, Retired)



Photo-1: Convair F-102 Delta Dagger, taxiing  
**24/7**  
Da Nang AB, 1965-1966  
(c) 2014, by Don Poss

I was not on base at Đà Nang Air Base on 1 July 1965, and not a part of the investigation of that date. A few of my TDY Đà Nang photos follow, pertaining to Airman Handy's account, of aircraft destroyed or damaged during the sapper and mortars attack.

As a Captain, I was one of the "experienced" pilots who were TDY to the 509th from approximately April 15 to July 15th, 1965. There were 14 of us from various stateside F-102 units. Lt Tom Kingery and I were from the 82nd FIS at Travis AFB. I was paired with Capt. Norris Price from Tyndall AFB as we rotated among the three deployment sites at Đà Nẵng, Tân Sơn Nhứt in South Vietnam and Don Muang outside of Bangkok, Thailand. Norrie and I were in Bangkok when the attack occurred and were scheduled to rotate to Đà Nang the next day. We arrived on a USMC version

of the C-47 to see the destruction Captain Ron Yates describes. Some of the wreckage was still smoldering.

At 78 (2010), I've been retired too long to have learned these computer things at work, so everything has been trial and error for me in the computer world. My grandson, who knows all about such arcane things, assists me so it's done right!

At Đà Nang Air Base, a C-130 loaded with flares had been disintegrated by a sapper's satchel charge. Repairs were made to at least one of the damaged F102's there, as some

shrapnel holes were inflicted. There were no 509th pilots on site who were on orders as maintenance test pilots, but I was designated one at my home base, so....

My Information concerning 1 July 1965: my name is Lt. Col. Roger A. Pile, USAF, Retired. I was not at Đà Nẵng AB on 1 July 1965, and I was not a part of the investigation of 1 July 1965. As a Captain, I was one of the "experienced" pilots who were TDY to the 509th from approximately April 15 to July 15th, 1965. There were 14 of us from various stateside F102 units. Lt Tom Kingery and I were from the 82nd FIS at Travis AFB.

**Photo-2. Đà Nang Air Base, July 1965:** Landing C123 on short-final, in sight of the SE F-102 concrete Revetment. East view, from AP flightline Post-51, near where SSGT Terance Jensen and A1C AL Handy engaged Sappers, 1 Jul 1965. Photo (c) by Don Poss, Da Nang AB, Jul 1965.



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**Photo-3, left, by:** Capt Roger Pile, standing by an F102 which had the leading edge of the wing melted from the heat of a C130 burning.

Some of the wreckage was still smoldering. A C-130 loaded with flares had been desintegrated by a satchel charge. Repairs were made to at least one of the F102's there, as some shrapnel holes were inflicted. There were no 509th pilots on site who were on orders as maintenance test pilots,

but I was a designated one at my home base, so I was given VOCO (verbal orders of the Commander, Lt Col Hartman) to perform the test flight. After two flights, I released it back to the flight line pilots.

The detachment was under fire from Viet Cong forces from outside the perimeter for the next few nights and we spent some time in the bunkers constructed for our protection.

One of the other deployed pilots, Sam Badtram, from Perrin AFB, bumped his head scurrying to the bunker on one of these occasions. He was awarded the Purple Heart! In 1968 I returned to the 509th on a two-year PCS move and deployed to Vietnam, Thailand, and Tainan, Taiwan for another two years as a Flight Commander, Detachment Commander and/or Squadron Training Officer, flying a total of 142 combat missions in the F102.

**Photo-4, below, by: Capt Roger Pile at the DOOM CLUB, Officer's Open Mess:** This is of the sign in front of the Officer's Open Mess. I had BBQ'ed steaks with Walter Kronkite there once.





**Photo-5, above, by: Capt Roger Pile, Da Nang AB 1965. Maintenance crews' trailers discussed earlier. This is the flight line bunker at the 509th FIS detachment at the end of the runway. In the background is our alert trailer. We always had two F102's loaded and ready for launch in five minutes.**



**Photo-6, above, by: Capt Roger Pile, Da Nang AB 1965. Maintenance troops flight line tents. One was pretty pretty much destroyed. Fortunately, they all escaped out the back and went to the bunker. If they had gone out the front, they would have triggered a trip-grenade. Debris in the middle of the 509th FIS detachment Maintenance trailers and tents area.**



**Photo-5.** 509th FIS detachment Maintenance trailers and tents' debris closeup. Near a checkpoint we passed between our barracks and the flight line on the way to work. Do you know anyone here? I recall the only fatality from the attack was an AP who took a bullet in the armpit as he was firing at the Viet Cong.



**Photo-6.** These are the 2 latrines adjacent to the site and behind the alert trailer. "Urinal" was a standpipe in the ground. You had to be careful it wasn't so full that you could pee on yourself. You can imagine the smell in the hot weather. We much preferred the flush toilets at our barracks.



**Photo-7.** This photo is a long shot of the aircraft after the attack, what's left of the C-130 which was loaded with flares, and a C-124 (?) also damaged in the raid.



**Photo-8.** Close-up of the C-130s. Two C-130's, one much more intact than the other, which was the one I was told was loaded with flares for a night mission. The F102 was parked next to it (below photo). [Note 23rd ABG/Air Police perimeter tower (center)]



**Photo-9.** *The F102 with destroyed cockpit is the same one of me standing by the wing.*

**Photo-10.** *An airborne photo of Đà Nẵng AB (center). The runway runs from the SW to the NE. This spectacular photo shows Đà Nẵng AB (center), Freedom Hill 327 (center left), China Beach (center right), and Monkey Mountain along the bay's coastline just out of view.*



I flew the F102 at Tyndall, Thule, Travis, Okinawa and Clark, deploying to Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan and Korea. Accumulated 1800 hrs and 142 combat missions in it over a 9 year

period between 1959 and 1970, with a break for an MBA for 18 months at Syracuse University. Was one of the pilots who flew the Thirsty Camel flight from Travis to Okinawa, the first at midair refueling for the Deuce in Feb 1966. While assigned to Clark, came back to Perrin to ferry another one back to Clark, perhaps the only one to do it twice. Jerry Doty was my wingman on the flight from Travis-Hahaii-Wake Island-Okinawa. We had to abort back into Hickam when I had a hydraulic problem right after take-off, so we waited another day for the second wave of 12

F-102's and joined them for the rest of the trip. The bird was a joy to fly and I loved my association with it. If anyone has a squadron patch from either the 82nd or the 509th, please contact me.

*I was awarded CRDC (Concurrent Receipt of Disability Compensation) along with my AF retirement due to the Agent Orange connection by merely being in-country. With two Social Security checks and the other two, I'm making more than on active duty. It took five tries before the VA tied my prostate and bladder cancers to Vietnam, but I never gave up!*

[Roger Pile](#), Captain (LTC, Retired)

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