

**24 December 1966 (Christmas Eve)**

**CRASH OF A CANADAIR CL-44D4-1 IN ĐÀ NẴNG: 111 KILLED**



**1) "U.S. Cargo Plane Hits Viet Town; 129 Killed, 42 Injured"**, Chicago Tribune, December 25, 1966, p3

**December 24, 1966** (Saturday), Crashed at 1921 hours, darkness.

A Flying Tiger Line cargo plane crashed into the ["Binh Thai hamlet"] Hòa Vang District of the South Vietnamese city of Đà Nẵng, killing at least 125 civilians and the plane's crew of four. The four-engine turboprop plane was arriving at Đà Nẵng after taking off from Tachikawa Airfield, Japan, and fell short of the runway as it attempted to land.[1]

**Circumstances:**

The crew was completing a cargo flight from Tachikawa AFB to Đà Nẵng on a subcontract mission for the US Air Force, carrying various equipments and goods. On final approach to Đà Nẵng Airport by night, the crew encountered poor weather conditions with heavy rain falls and fog. In low visibility, the crew failed to realize altitude was too low, when the airplane struck an obstacle, stalled and crashed in flames in the district of Binh Thai located few dozen yards short of runway. The aircraft disintegrated on impact and several houses were destroyed. All four crew members were killed as well as 107 people on the ground. 50 others were injured, among them, 19 seriously.

**Causes:**

It is believed that the crew continued the approach below the glide in below-minimal weather conditions, probably in order to establish a visual contact with the ground. Poor weather conditions and low visibility were considered as contributing factors.



## Cargo Plane Crash Kills 60 in S. Viet

ARTICLE'S TEXT

### Cargo Plane Crash Kills 60 in S. Viet

DA NANG, South Vietnam (UPI)—A Flying Tiger cargo plane trying to land in slashing rain and dense fog at the Da Nang airport plowed into a row of houses today and killed at least 60 persons. The death toll was expected to climb.

The four engine plane carrying cargo from Tachikawa, Japan, hit about a mile and a half from the end of the runway at this big U.S. Marine airbase, slashed through rows of flimsy houses and exploded in flames, setting the houses afire.

Marines rushed emergency vehicles to the Vietnamese village but it was too late. The four man crew and the 60 or more villagers died in the first few seconds of the holocaust.

A Military spokesman said many of the victims were young children celebrating the Christmas ceasefire that brought most of the war in Vietnam to a halt.

The spokesman said the plane broke up into two large chunks and several smaller pieces and demolished at least 12 homes, setting fires that spread to many others.

Fierce fires fed by fuel from the plane's ruptured gasoline tanks were still burning more than five hours after the crash. Dozens of persons injured by flying debris or suffering from burns were rushed to a Marine field hospital.

Fierce monsoon rains which have lashed the area blacked out the airport and the plane was making a Ground Controlled Approach (GCA) when it caught the row of houses and exploded.

It was the second such disaster near the Da Nang airbase. A U.S. Marine fighter-bomber crashed into some houses near the end of the runway last summer killing or injuring scores of Vietnamese.

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## Death Toll Hits 111 in Viet Crash of 'Tiger' Cargo Plane

DA NANG, South Vietnam (UPI)—The official death toll in the Vietnam war's worst air disaster rose to 111 today as grim American Marines recovered more bodies from the charred Vietnamese village of Dinh Thai.

The dead included 107 Vietnamese villagers and the four American crewmen of the Flying Tiger CL-44 cargo plane that mysteriously went off course and smashed through the tiny hamlet on Christmas Eve.

U.S. officials said another 18 persons were wounded and 20 others still were missing.

The four-engine plane, carrying GI clothing from Japan, was attempting a radar-controlled night approach landing at the giant Da Nang airbase nearby in heavy fog.

The search for bodies continued today.

"There are people with no arms, no hands, no legs," said Marine Lance Cpl. Alfred E. Johnson of (547 Rosedale) Pittsburgh.

Johnson was a member of a Marine combined action team that has lived for several months on the edge of Binh Thai hamlet, a cluster of thatched huts housing 1,500 Vietnamese some 3,000 yards from the busy jet runways at Da Nang.

Behind Johnson lay a blackened propeller, a twisted bedstead, huge piles of rubble and the cockpit section of the cargo liner—split open like a dead fish and flipped on its back.

Johnson and two of his buddies were among the first to reach the hamlet Christmas Eve during the fiery minutes after the CL-44 undershot the runway and cut a fiery swath through 66 of Binh Thai's thatched-roof huts.

Johnson said he was sitting with a number of other Marines in their tiny compound about 100 yards from the village when the plane hit.

"It was Christmas Eve," he said. "And we were all talking. We heard a scraping, and all of a sudden there was a big light and flames.

"It lit up the whole side of the area. We, Corporal Hellis and the doc went up there. We saw the flames. There was a helicopter. Then we started dragging out the dead ones," Johnson said.

The "doc" was Hospitalman Third Class William Millar of (Route 5, Box 5167B) Wenatchee, Wash. His eyebrows were singed and he wore dark glasses today because his eyes were still inflamed from the smoke.

"There were a bunch of flames up there," Millar said, pointing to where the main wreckage lay at the end of a long furrow.

"Back here, the Vietnamese were running around, grabbing us by the arm and asking us to take out their people.

"Two babies were up there still alive. That's why we went up there."

"It was morbid," said Lance Cpl. Leonard K Hellis of (1360 Alamo) Memphis, Tenn. "You couldn't walk without hitting a body.

"Many of them were babies—one, two or three years old."

At least some of the victims were former residents of another hamlet about 1,000 yards away which lost 27 people last Aug. 17 when a Marine

Corps F8 jet fighter crashed into it.

Air Force Lt. Col. Charles M. Taylor of Reedley, Calif. was directing efforts to recover the bodies.

"I have been in this business for 28 years," he said today, "and this is the first time we've had to grovel in sand for bodies."

The Marines bore the brunt of the job of digging for the bodies. Col Walter Moore of Oceanside, Calif. the civic affair officer for the U. S. 1st Marine Division, was coordinating the effort.

"Yesterday," he said, "we formed a civic action committee, including the village chief, the hamlet chief and two police chiefs.

"A census is going on right now to determine the status of each family.

"When we get to the point where we know what each wants," he added, "we'll start building huts as they want them built."

Desert Sun, Volume 40, Number 123,  
26 December 1966 —

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ARTICLE'S TEXT FOLLOWS BELOW

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## CRASH OF A CANADAIR CL-44D4-1 IN ĐÀ NẴNG: 111 KILLED



**Date & Time:** Dec 24, 1966 at 1915 LT

**Type of aircraft:** Canadair CL-44 **Operator:**

**Registration:** N228SW

**Flight Phase:** Landing (descent or approach)

**Flight Type:** Cargo

**Survivors:** No

**Site:**

**Schedule:** Tachikawa, Đà Nẵng.

[Tachikawa is a city located in the western portion of Tokyo Metropolis, Japan.]

**MSN:** 31

**YOM:** 1966

**Location:** Đà Nẵng Air Base

**Đà Nẵng City District, Country:** Vietnam

**Region:** Asia

**Crew on board:** 4

**Crew fatalities:** 4

**Pax on board:** 0

**Pax fatalities:** 0

**Other fatalities:** 107

**Total fatalities:** 111





 Đà Nẵng, Vietnam — Sunrise, Sunset, and Daylength, December 1966