

**6252nd Tactical Fighter Wing
Da Nang Air Base
Republic of Vietnam**

The 6252nd submitted one history to the AFHRA, the July through December 1965 history (IRIS Number 462328). However, some of their activities can be found in the unit histories that replaced the 6252nd—the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing (AFHRA Call Number K-WG-35-HI, January through June 1966, IRIS Number 449676. Additional base activities at Da Nang prior to the 6252nd can also be found in the 6222 Air Base Squadron, starting on 8 July 1963; the 23rd Air Base Group histories, covering the July 1963 through June 1965 time period under K-GP-AB-23-HI, Iris Numbers 437540 through 437543).

Extract, 6252 Tactical Fighter Wing, July through December 1965 (AFHRA Call Number K-WG-6252-HI, Jul-Dec 1965, IRIS Number 462328):

Page x, Viet Cong Attack on Da Nang Air Base:

A 14 man Viet Cong suicide squad attacked Da Nang Air Base at 0130 hours, 1 July 1965, destroying three aircraft and damaging seven others. The infiltrators entered the air base from a position between the base and the southern defense perimeter. They immediately ran through the area where C-130 and F-102 alert aircraft were parked, hurling hand-grenades and spraying the area with semi-automatic weapons fire.

Within five minutes after the first explosions were heard, 81 millimeter mortar fire began to land on the south end of the field. The exact number of mortar rounds fired could not be determined, however, fourteen mortar craters were discovered on the overrun to the runway and numerous others landed nearby.

As a result of the attack, two C-130's and one F-102 was totally destroyed, also, two F-102s sustained extensive damage, four others sustained minor damage and one C-130 was seriously damaged but considered repairable. One air policeman was killed by small arms fire and several crew members were injured by flying glass.

[NOTE: SSgt Terance K. Jensen, 23rd Air Base Group Air Police, was killed and five Air Force members injured (not seriously) when unfriendly forces attacked the base flight line, Da Nang AB, RVN, with mortar and small arms fire. The injured members treated and released:

Capt. Eldon W. Badtram
TSgt Denver Cook
TSgt James T. Garren
A1C Clifford C. Tanner
A2C Carl J. Wilkins]

The method used by the Viet Cong to enter the USAF restricted area was to infiltrate through the outer perimeter defenses and then by cutting through the inner perimeter fences. The infiltrators were observed by an air police area supervisor and the entry controller just prior to the first explosion. The AP immediately instructed the entry controller to notify Central Security Control (CS) and then he exchanged fire with the enemy.

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This action alerted the base, however, the air policeman was killed by the heavy automatic fire from the attacker's weapons.

Up to the date of the attack, no joint security/defense command center had been established. The general internal security was DEFCON 3. The Air Police internal security forces were responsible for the security of their operational resources and did not receive any guidance from a joint command center.

Air policemen throughout the period were utilized for close in and close boundary positions and the USMC, VNAF, and 178 Signal Company (USA), provided perimeter protection. Approximately 80 percent of the immediate base perimeter was the responsibility of the USMC, 10 percent was the responsibility of VNAF, and the remaining 10 percent the 178th Signal Company. The area of infiltration occurred through USMC area of responsibility. External base protection in depth was provided by the Da Nang Special Sector.

According to information obtained from a wounded Viet Cong caught early on the morning of 1 July 1965, the 1 July attack on Da Nang AB, was carried out by a specially formed unit called the NGUYEN VAN TROI Company. This company was named after the VC that was executed for bombing the American Embassy in Saigon. This task-organized unit was composed of a special demolition squad, a platoon of four 81mm mortars, and two rifle platoons with one 57 recoilless rifle. The demolition squad was sent from the 3rd Bn., 18th Reg., of the 325 Division to Military Region 5 especially trained for this mission. After a 30 day training period, the company moved to a staging area south of Da Nang.

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From there, they made a three day move to a position along the south bank of the Song Cau Do river, approximately 2 1.2 miles S.E. of the airfield. On the night of 30 June, the company rented boats and crossed the river at approximately 2000 hours. The rifle and mortar platoons were generally deployed on the line and parallel to the airfield fence. The right mortars were to fire on the aircraft parking area while the left section was to fire on the helicopter parking area. The demolition team was to cut the fence and plant the charges. The withdrawal was made through 10-12 holes cut in the fence and under cover of automatic weapons and rifle fire of the platoon. The rendezvous area was approximately 5 ½ miles S.E. of the field.

Page 1, Mission:

The 6252nd Tactical Fighter Wing was designated and organized on 8 July 1965 at Da Nang AB. The unit designation was the result of the discontinuance of the 23rd Air Base Group at Da Nang.

Page 19, 311th Air Commando Squadron:

The number of C-123s possessed by the 311th dropped from 17 to 16 when on 21 November 1965 one aircraft made a crash landing in a field off the south end of the runway at Da Nang Air base, the plane was a total loss. The circumstances leading up the crash landing and the subsequent loss of the aircraft were:

On 21 November 1965, a 311th flare aircraft returning to Da Nang after being on target, 26 miles south of Da Nang, for approximately six hours, crashed at Da Nang. The fuel gauges indicated plenty of fuel remained for the return trip. The weather was marginal and during letdown for final approach the windshields fogged over. A go-around was initiated under GCA control, but on the down-wind leg, the right engine quit. An attempt to restart it failed and emergency procedures were begun. As the pilot right suspected, the fuel gauges were giving faulty indications. As he turned the base leg to final approach, the left engine failed and a crash

landing was made off the south end of the runway. One member of the crew suffered a severe concussion, but the remainder escaped with minor injuries. The plane was a total loss.

On 1 July 1965, a 311th Flare aircraft was launched in response to a request from the Marine force standing perimeter defense five miles west of Da Nang Air Base. The aircraft dropped flares in the area for approximately 30 minutes before being directed to stand by for an unidentified higher priority target. While orbiting over the original target area, the crew observed a brilliant flash and a series of explosions that appeared to be in the Da Nang Air Base complex.

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The crew realized they were in a position to provide illumination for the base defense force to react successfully if the explosions were the results of a Viet Cong penetration of the base. The crew proceeded toward the base where they observed more explosions and automatic weapons fire at the south end of the runway. Verifying that an attack was in progress, the crew illuminated the area. For a short period of time the flare illumination provided the only deterrent to the further prosecution of the attack.

During this period, the flare aircraft was forced to descend due to deteriorating weather conditions and was subjected to enemy ground fire. This was made more hazardous because they had to operate with all navigational lights on to avoid collision with airborne strike aircraft. After the initial action was completed, the crew remained over the air base to provide an airborne alert capability until dawn.

Page 47, 6252 Munitions Maintenance Squadron:

The secondary mission of the 6252 MMS was to act as a depot function of temporarily storing and periodically transshipping ordnance by way of emergency airlift, to other bases in the Southeastern theater of operations.

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The ordnance...was palletized for later air shipment to other bases.

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The periodic influx of TDY personnel to assist with the munitions handling at Da Nang had been of great assistance.

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By July 1965, approximately 15-20 percent of ordnance received was transshipped to other SEA bases. At the end the period [December 1965] the tonnage received in the storage area at Da Nang that was prepared for air shipment to other bases amounted to 47 percent, or nearly half of the ordnance shipped into the 6252nd MMS for processing. Additionally, three times more 20mm ammunition was shipped out of Da Nang than was expended by locally based aircraft.

[NOTE: In April 1966 the 6252nd MMS was inactivated and the 435th MMS at Da Nang activated to take its place. Those histories basically repeat the above concerning MMS activities. In both unit histories, there is no mention of any bomb racks being shipped or individuals arriving from Thailand specifically to arrange shipment of bomb racks to Thailand.]

Page 66, 6252nd Air Police Squadron:

The mission of the 6252nd Air Police Squadron was to protect USAF resources and insure proper order and discipline of Air Force personnel. A major portion of the effort was devoted to

securing the large number of priority resources such as tactical aircraft, munitions and command and control facilities.

In July 1965, there were only three officers and just over 200 Air Policemen assigned at Da Nang AB. At the end of the July-December period, there were eight officers and 425 Air Policemen assigned.

Threats of enemy sabotage or terrorist activity were constant in the Da Nang AB area as evidenced by the July 1965 attack.

The defense of Da Nang AB against enemy attack was a defense in depth. On the perimeter of the base four companies of Marines had established a line of defensive positions. Outward from these positions marine patrols ranged nightly, attempting to engage the enemy as far from the base as possible. Enemy snipers and mines were not infrequently contacted within 31mm mortar range of the base. Inside the marine defensive positions, Air Police formed a series of rings around the several separated areas containing priority resources. Some of these areas were the B-57 area, parking apron, south revetment area and cantonment area.

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Air Police were guarding the areas around the clock. During the critical hours of 2400 to 0400 nightly a special flight of Air Police, trained in night encounters, supplemented the twenty-four hour defensive positions. Air Police sentries were armed with the M-16 automatic rifle except in areas of congested aircraft where the 12 gauge shotgun was employed.

In isolated areas, Air Force 4 Sentry Dogs formed an early detection line on approaches to restricted areas.

Approximately 30 percent of the defensive ring around the base was manned by Vietnamese forces.

There were three basic security problems associated with the defense of Da Nang AB. These problems as they existed were:

(a) Air Police had no authority over non-U.S. Nationals and since a Vietnamese Air Policeman was not always at the scene of suspicious activity there could be no clear distinction made between hostile and friendly Vietnamese without investigation. Several thousand Vietnamese were employed by the base. There was no way to definitely determine if a group of workmen contained a Viet Cong saboteur until a hostile act was committed.

(b) Since various security forces were employed on and around the installation (VNAF, ARVN, Air Force), there occasionally arose a problem of coordination between the various security activities. This problem had been reduced by increased cooperation among the various forces and the establishment of a Mixed Security Command Post.

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Each service sent a representative to this Command Post during emergency operations. The representatives exchanged information and kept the commander informed of security steps taken by the other forces.

(e) Lack of equipment was problem indigenous to any military buildup. The lack of vehicles posed an acute transportation problem. Sufficient vehicles were not available to carry

both patrol and sentry post personnel. In July there were only three vehicles available for full time use. During the hours of darkness other vehicles were used on a loan basis from other organizations. Buildings to house the larger Air Police operation, to enlarge the kennel area were constructed by Air Police personnel. Water for the isolated kennel area was transported by a converted fuel tank truck. A shortage of communications equipment also existed. Portable radios were available in a limited number only and some posts did not have field phones.

Many of these problems were overcome with the gradual buildup of equipment, improved cooperation between defense forces and the overall ability of the personnel of the 6252nd Air Police Squadron to get the most out of the bare minimum.