

35th Tactical Fighter Wing

Extract, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing history, January through June 1966 (AFHRA Call Number K-WG-35-HI, Jan-Jun 1966, IRIS Number 449676):

Page iv, Da Nang, Yesterday and Today:

On 8 July 1965, the host unit, the 23rd Air Base Group was discontinued and the 6252nd Tactical Fighter Wing was organized. This was again changed when the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing was activated at Da Nang Air Base in April 1966 replacing the 6252nd Tactical Fighter Wing.

Da Nang AB has indeed grown, both structurally and materially. Da Nang Air Base now served as the springboard for most Air Force strikes originating in the Republic of South Vietnam against the Communist insurgents in Laos and North Vietnam. In addition, because of its strategic location, (83 nautical miles from the Demilitarized Zone DMZ), it was the primary recovery base for all military aircraft returning from out of country raids, that were either reaching minimum (Bing)(fuel point, had sustained battle damage, or having mechanical problems with their aircraft. This was of special importance to Naval aircraft operating from aircraft carriers in the South China Sea, where they chose Da Nang's 10,000 foot runway over the limited landing area of the ships whenever there was any possibility of an explosion or fire during any emergency landing.

Chronology: 1966

January

- 12 **Da Nang based B-57 crashed on take-off** at the south end of runway at Da Nang. Both aircraft and crew were lost.
- 17 **B-57 returning to Da Nang after a strike mission went out of control and crashed into the Da Nang Bay.** Both crewmembers were successfully recovered.
- 25 **Da Nang attacked, 1 KIA [A3C James B. Jones, 6252nd Air Police Squadron, died of wounds from mortar blast fragments. He was on duty as air police security guard.], 3 WIA [SSgt Arthur L. Brooks, A1C Marvin E. Cooperider, and A1C William Crowell, Jr.]**

April

- 8 **The 6252nd Tactical Fighter Wing at Da Nang was inactivated and the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing was activated** in its place.

Page 6, Political Situation, From Thi to Chaos:

In fact, on 21 May, the rebel forces fired approximately 11 rounds of 61mm at Da Nang Air Base. The attack commenced at 0735 on the 21st and lasted for only six minutes. The attack was supposedly directed at Vietnamese installations on the base rather than U.S. personnel or equipment.

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Following the mortar attack, confirmed hits were as follows:

One near B-57 revetment area.
One, 100 yards east of Command Post, in an open field.
Two on ramp between base operations and Marine F-4B parking area.
Three, plus one dud in communication storage area.
One, adjacent to Personnel Equipment shop.
Two, just south of chapel in VNAF hospital area.

The casualties were minor [five WIA]. One airman had a minor scalp laceration and one, a neck wound (superficial).

TSgt Michael Martyniuk
A1C Bobbie D. Hamric
A1C James E. Doucette
A2C Gary P. Truhett
A2C Walter L. Jones

Damage to the base and property included:

One 60KW generator at B-57 area hit.
One Jamesway hut, perforated ceiling.
Three vehicles riddled by shrapnel
One tent damaged.
One fuel storage tank damaged.
One conex damaged.

Two days later, May 23, government troops secured the stadium area in Da Nang from which the mortar attack had been launched. Also on the same day some 100 struggle forces in Da Nang surrendered following a government guarantee of amnesty.

At 1800 on 23 May, struggle forces which were holding out in the Tin Hoi and Pho Da pagodas in Da Nang capitulated. Over 1,300 weapons, 250 uniformed personnel, 75 civilians and 33 bodies were removed from the Tin Hoi pagoda.

On 31 May, Maj. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam was named the new I Corps commander. He was the third successor of General Thi. Following the capitulation of the struggle force in Da Nang and the naming of the new I Corps commander, the political situation in Da Nang returned to "normal."

Page 17, 13th Tactical Bombardment Squadron:

The tally of destruction and pound of munitions expended were impressive, however, they were accomplished at the cost of four lives and the loss of three aircraft. **The first B-57 lost by the 13th occurred on 12 January when the aircraft, fully loaded, crashed on take off.**

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The aircraft came to rest about 1,000 feet southwest of the runway. The aircraft was completely destroyed, and both crew members were killed.

On 17 January, while returning to Da Nang from a strike mission the second B-57 of the 13th TBS was lost. The aircraft went out of control and crashed offshore in the Da Nang bay. Both crew members ejected safely and were quickly recovered.

The third aircraft was lost on 9 February over enemy territory.

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On 13 June, a B-57 was lost while on a mission over North Vietnam.

Page 27, 390th Tactical Fighter Squadron:

With the assumption of night operations, the problem of crew rest again became evident. It was felt by the crew members and squadron official the open bay barracks provided were too noisy and hot to afford the crew proper rest during the days which followed their night missions.

On 22 May [sic—should be June] 1966, 10 crews of the 390th went TDY to Ubon AB, Thailand for a four day check out with the 8th Tactical Fighter Squadron personnel on “Night Owl” operations over North Vietnam. During the four day period, these 10 crews of the 390th logged 44 sorties before returning to Da Nang.

Page 49, 8th Tactical Bombardment Squadron:

Two major accidents were the result of a mid-air collision, the results of the investigation were not final at the writing of this document. The minor accident was the result of a gear up landing when the gear would not come down.

Page 104, 35th Air Police Squadron:

Concurrent with the activation of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing on 8 April, the 35th Air Police Squadron was formed. It replaced the 6252nd Air Police Squadron which was inactivated on the same date.

The Mission of the 35th Air Police Squadron was to protect U.S. Air Force 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.

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In January 1966, there were eight officers and 425 air policemen assigned to the squadron. At the end of the period there were still eight officers and 438 air policemen assigned.

Threats of enemy sabotage or terrorist activity were constant in the Da Nang area as evidenced by the [25] January mortar attack when one air policemen was killed in action [A3C James B. Jones]. During the height of the attack, the squadron demonstrated the ability to expand rapidly and efficiently into an emergency security posture to repel possible sniper activity by the enemy.

The defense of Da Nang AB against enemy attacks was a defense in depth. On the perimeter of the base four companies of Marines had established a line of defensive positions. Enemy snipers and mines were not infrequently contacted within 81mm 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, F-4C area, parking apron, south revetment area and the main cantonment area. **Air Police were guarding these areas around the clock. During the critical hours of 2400 to 0400 hours nightly, a special flight of Air Policemen, 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.**

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In isolated areas, Air Force sentry dogs formed an early detection line on approaches to restricted areas.

Tab 4, History of the 13th Tactical Bombardment Squadron, Jan-Jun 1966:

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On the 12th of January, the squadron mourned the loss of **Captain Leon b. Smith and Major Elijah J. Tollett**, who died tragically on the Da Nang runway. By their sacrifice they inscribed their names in honor and in the memory of the 13th Bomb Squadron, whose members have given their lives for the cause of freedom in four wars since 1916.

A B-57 went out of control and crashed offshore of Da Nang on 17 January, but the crew, Captains Edward J. Cook and Hugh M. Davidson ejected safely and were quickly recovered from the sea. Their safe escape from the crippled aircraft was a tribute to the quality of their survival equipment and to the fine work of the squadron's personal equipment section.

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The thud of mortars and the staccato of automatic rifles are familiar sounds to anyone who has spent more than a few days at Da Nang. Viet Cong operate close enough to the airbase to harass departing and arriving aircraft with small-arms fire, and the efforts of several thousand U.S. Marines to prevent their advance past the base boundaries result in frequent armed encounters and skirmishes. But the bans and thumps of **15 May** were of a different sort, and marked the start of activities which, by week's end, would closely involve the men and airplanes of the 13th bomb Squadron.

Three thousand loyal troops of Premier Ky had descended upon the rebellious city of Da Nang, as the premier determined to reassert his authority against militant Buddhists and disloyal elements in his own army. The conflict grew in violence; by the fifth day, Vietnamese Air Force Skyraiders were strafing and rocketing rebel positions, and the rebels were directing mortar fire against the VNAF aircraft on the base. Mortar shells, presumably from the rebels, sent the base's military personnel scampering to the bunkers three times in one morning. Rockets from the VNAF Skyraiders went astray and wounded three U.S. Marines. Shrapnel punched eight holes in the jeep, fortunately unoccupied at the time, of Lt. Colonel William J. Amos, the 13th's Commander, and struck the side of the squadron's operations building. That was close enough.

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Eighteen of the squadron's twenty B-57's were evacuated to Bien Hoa, from where they flew their missions in a "business-as-usual" manner. **By Sunday, 22 May, the rebels in Da Nang had surrendered.** The city became quiet once more, and the Canberras came home.

Tab 11, History of the 8th Tactical Bombardment Squadron, Jan-Jun 1966:

Page 28, Aircraft Accidents:

The major aircraft accident was the result of a mid-air collision, the results of the investigation was not final at the writing of this document. The minor aircraft accident was the result of a gear up landing when the gear would not come down.

Extract, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing history, July through September 1966 (AFHRA Call Number K-WG-35-HI, Jul-Sep 1966, IRIS Number 449677):

Page 14, Wing Safety Office:

During the July-September period, there were two major aircraft accidents (28 Aug, F-4C 64-798 and 24 Sep, F-4C 63-7470) and 19 reportable incidents.

Page 41, 35th Air Police Squadron:

The mission of the 35th Air Police Squadron, Da Nang AB, RVN, was to provide required security and law enforcement in support of the base mission. During this quarter, increased emphasis has been placed on uniform violations, military courtesy and vehicle appearance. The security mission has remained essentially the same, close boundary security of the flight line and the cantonment area.

There have been no hostile attacks against Da Nang Air Base proper during this reporting period; however, the Marines have made several contacts off-base in the nearby area. **The use of sentry dog teams and the specially trained night security units, known as "Tiger Flight," had proven to be an effective deterrent against acts of sabotage and/or attack by hostile forces.** The Quick Reaction Forces (QRF) and SAT (Security Augmentee Team) units continue to conduct frequent practice exercises to insure that either team is capable of handling any given situation in an absolute minimum of time. **An example of their effectiveness occurred in August 1966**, when an aircraft from this base crashed into a small village just outside the base perimeter and immediately burst into flames. Five nearby off duty Air Policemen, who had previously received QRF and SAT training, witnessed the accident and immediately responded to the scene.

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Without hesitation they began evacuating the villagers (some forcibly) and rendering aid to the injured. While so doing, **one one-thousand pound bomb exploded and a cache of small arms ammunition in the area commenced exploding.** These airmen continued their heroic efforts without regard to personnel safety and were later accredited with the saving of many lives. Each team member has since been recommended for the Airman's Medal.

Another example of their effectiveness occurred in mid-September 1966, when a bomb was accidentally released from a taxiing aircraft. A sentry on duty in that area notified CES and one SAT was immediately dispatched. By the time other Disaster Control Teams arrived at the scene the SAT had cordoned off the area and had established an access control point.