

Something's Not Right –

"... it all rolls down hill"

Đà Nẵng Air Base

1969

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Something's Not Right...

Another rocket attack -- it's Đà Nẵng -- *rocket city*-- what do you expect? About five to eight rounds and another one of Charlie's harassment efforts. He knows that we won't go away so he's making a pain in the butt out of himself. Trouble is -- it's working.

Charlie found out that if he just set up and shot anywhere from one to eight rockets to fire on us with, and then split's, he could do more to damage us than by concentrating a full out attack on us. So for a while he'd shoot and then run. Wait, one, two or four days, whatever, and then shoot and run again. Anytime from midnight to 0400 every one to four days, one to eight rounds were in-coming and aimed in our general direction. So you had no idea of where they would land. flight line, barracks area-- didn't matter. First week no effect, second week, we started to see the results of his efforts. Planes would take off and have to return because of in-flight emergencies. Ordnance would drop off on take off, or worse, not drop off when it was supposed to. Landing with hanging bombs is not a happy ending, more than one F4 blew up on touching down because of that.

And why was that you ask? well, the ground personnel who serviced the aircraft and loaded ordnance were getting up at midnight and going out to the bunkers and trying to sleep crowded together like sheep for the rest of the night in the bunker. Waking up at every sound or not sleeping at all. Needless to say they looked like hell and their efficiency was suffering because of it. We'd sit out on post and watch the explosions happen behind us and wait to see if any thing else was going to follow. Never did, but then you never knew either.



We also had one special post that we were doing at that time. It was the large BX liquor warehouses (*Photo Left, c.1968*). Seems that up to a pallet of booze was being pilfered regularly and the Colonel in charge of the BX wanted to put a stop to it. So he came down and asked us if we could post a 'mean' sentry dog and 'tea-totaller' handler inside the warehouse to end this pilferage. The colonel knew that Air Force sentry dogs were not like 'scout' or 'trail' dogs that everyone could pet. Sentry dogs were by God's design the meanest vicious hate-everything killers on four legs, excluding Tyrannosaurs Rex. In other words: perfect to catch or deter the wicked alcohol

thieving jarheads, squids, grunts, or V.C. -- *likely in that order*. We told the Colonel we could accommodate his request with the meanest-evil sentry dogs in Vietnam, but hinted strongly that it might be difficult to find a sentry dog *handler* who was also a 'tea-totaller' and that, maybe, *not all* the thefts inside would end. We could guarantee there would not be any more *major losses* like he had been experiencing... but... there would *probably* be a *bottle or two* missing every night -- *wink, wink* -- by those wicked renown lusters-of-women, and alcohol thieving jarheads, squids, grunts, and or Viet Cong.

The Colonel scowled... then shrugged his shoulders and said that a *bottle or two* would be *acceptable losses* compared to what he's been experiencing. *We had a sweetheart deal!* Whoever had the detail could bring out whatever they picked out, and everyone knew not to abuse it. Life was great! Until the next in-coming.

Charlie tossed in about eight to ten rounds in our direction, and most of them landed around the main gate area and had possibly hit the BX. We gave no further thought to it until morning when we got a call that the handler who was posted inside the liquor warehouse was not answering the radio call to come out and catch a ride with the Security Police *ramp-rats* (SPs who guarded aircraft on the flight line) back to the K-9 kennels. The SP ramp rats told us flat out, *something's not right*, and they were not going to go inside to see what had

happened because the sentry dog could be running loose, and we had to get some of our guys out there 'right now' to check it out. So off about five of us puppy-pushers went to check it out.

On arriving, there were three SP ramp rats standing out front of the BX. They had been banging on the door and using their radio's trying to communicate with the sentry dog handler inside. However even with all the noise and commotion they were making, they were not getting any response from either the handler or the dog inside the warehouse.

Two of us had attack sleeves (used to train sentry dogs during attack); and all were carrying muzzles, leashes and we had a shipping crate in the ready. We opened the door and went inside, not knowing what to expect but fearing for the worse that possibly one the mortars had penetrated the BX roof and exploded inside.

It took about five minutes or less of searching until we found them – dog handler and K-9 sound asleep; make that, passed out drunk with an empty bottle of Chivas Regal lying close to the handler and a six pack of empty beer cans by the dog. At first glance it was obvious the handler had taken off his helmet and used it without the liner as a bowl to pour beer into for his dog to drink.

We approached them and then the dog woke up. Have you ever seen a really, really drunk dog? Make it funnier, a really, really, really, drunk *sentry* dog? First all the sentry dog's training kicks in, and then the reality of the situation hits him:

“BOW WOW”–“ I’M A BAD ASSED (*dog burp*) SENTRY DOG AND I CAN... I can... oweeeeee--bit my tongue!”

“GROWL!” “YOU’RE ALL, all... all?? *what was I saying?*”

Something even funnier is watching a wasted sentry dog try to stand up to reinforce his claim to being a world-class killer, and thus intimidated you into submission. His four legs went out in six directions, all at once, and he ended up sprawled out in an awkward, and unnatural looking position glancing up at you with a glazed look on his face, while trying to drool intelligently. The handler was worse, except he didn't wake up. But the glazed look, unnatural sprawl, dried and wet drooling, was all there -- they made a pair.

It was not overly difficult to pin the sentry dog's head down with attack sleeves; slip on a muzzle, and then stuff 80 pounds of furry beer-sodden-hair-ball into the shipping crate. The handler, we got him to his feet and had to carry him out of there. We got the two of them on our duce and a half truck and ended up dropping him off at the Sentry Dog Handler hooch and the dog at the kennels. I don't think either of them woke up again during the trip. Crisis over.

Seems that most of the rounds Charlie lobbed at us had landed right around the liquor warehouse, a large metal building. Shrapnel and all was bouncing off of the walls and roof as well as going through it in places making one hell of a racket. And as far as the handler was concerned, they were aiming for him and his buddy and well, when it was all over, and he figured out that he was going to live to see the sunshine again, thought the occasion deserved a proper celebration. He said his intentions were to have a little nip, maybe share some with his partner, and when off duty do a more correct jubilation. Only things got away from them – sentry dogs love beer -- and one beer led to two, which led to three and, there you go.

Shortly afterwards a new Colonel took over the BX and started complaining about us removing our *one bottle a night tax* we had imposed. We pointed out to him that we were doing this as a favor and that the handler assigned would normally have had the night off -- but he wouldn't hear it. So we pulled the post and there went that source of supply.

Don't know how things went afterwards but we were never asked to guard the BX Liquor Warehouse again. I have to say that I have never saw a sentry dog that wasted again.

Đà Nẵng AB BX was hit by mortars on a few occasions. Below photo is of a rocket attack in 1971 that also struck the BX.



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