

FLAREBIRDS

USAF Blind Bat, 21st TCS

Account of the Đà Nẵng AB Sapper Attack, July 1, 1965

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SMSGt, USAF Retired, (aka Flarebird)

TDY Đà Nẵng AB from Naha AB Okinawa, July 1966

by Photos by [Ralph Krach](#), and [Robert J. Kendrick](#)

[On 1 July 1965, at 0130 hours, Đà Nẵng Air Base, SVN, received six (6) 81mm mortar rounds in a Stand Off attack, coordinated with a Sapper attack. U.S. losses included six (6) aircraft destroyed and three (3) damaged. U.S. casualties were one (1) KIA and three (3) WIA. RVN losses were zero. VC/NVA losses included one (1) POW captured. (*p172, Air Base Defense In The Republic of Vietnam 1961-1973*)]

Flarebirds were a Top Secret outfit and cameras were forbidden. The below color photos are of the melted C-130 Flarebirds at Đà Nẵng after sappers penetrated the perimeter during a mortar attack. The color photos were taken by officers on a flight sent in to take us to get new birds. We were the first to *kick flares* from C-130s, and we did it out of Đà Nẵng for more than a year.

I remember Air Police Staff Sergeant [Terry Jensen](#) (35th APS), who was killed in action during the night sapper attack of 1 July 1965. SSgt Jensen, was guarding our birds and the F-102s on that end of the runway. He was found dead behind his truck. We all survived and were sent back to Naha AB Okinawa on 1 July 1965 to get new planes. I also remember Airman Harshberger (35th APS). Harshberger always got that outpost at night. I remember Terry Jensen from the Club. We sometimes compared weapons because we carried .45s or M&P.38s (old ones without US Navy stamped on them) and Terry Jensen carried the new K.38 revolver.

Terry had wanted to ride with us on a mission, but we were forbidden to take anyone along. I remembered Terry and a couple of other AP's because they always stopped by when we were loading and doing maintenance on the birds. They had two little sandbag outposts down there by the revetments, one by the alert tents and one on the taxiway about halfway to the C 130's. Terry was trying to go with us one night to see just what we did.

I still can't believe I found the VSPA articles about Terry Jensen. I figured he had been forgotten since it was fairly early in the war and nobody gave things much publicity then. I can understand some of the writers miss-identifying the C-130s' mission because we were still hush-hush, and most people at Đà Nẵng really didn't know what we were. One misconception concerned Agent Orange, but C-130s never dumped Agent Orange.

Your article about a B-57 crash brings back a memory. Somewhere around January 1966 we were flight-training some new crew (flare kickers) during the daytime. We got back over Đà Nẵng Air Base just as a B-57 was rolling down the runway—jettisoning his bombs as he rolled—and then crashed off the South end of the runway. I'm not sure of the date but I'm pretty sure that the F-102s were still parked down at that end.



Results of a Sapper Attack at midnight, 30 June 1965, Danang AB. 55039 is behind the revetment. 55039 and 55042 were completely destroyed. 56475, my a/c, was repaired and eventually flown back to the states.

[1] **Ralph Krach** Photo: Total loss of #55042, is seen above.





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2) **Ralph Krach Photos:** Three C-130s were blown by sapper charges during the attack. #55039 and #55042 were completely destroyed, but my aircraft, #56475, was repaired and eventually flown back to the states.



3) **Kendrick, Robert Photo:** C-130 #55042 was destroyed and burnt, except for the tail section. C-130 #56475's tail can be seen above the revetment (right) was rebuilt and flown to the states. C-130, tail number 55039's props can be see resting vertically on the pavement amidst debris (two additional photos follow, from different perspectives).





The pictures showing the C-130's at Đà Nẵng AB VN were taken on the morning of 1 July 1965. They were all flare ships. It was two 55 models, 55042, 55039 and a 56 model 560475. The flare mission started with E Flight of the 21st TCS. Missions were flown by crews from the 21st TCS and the 815 TCS. The Captain in the one picture was Dan Daigle of the 21st TCS he was the only one who had a camera. On the night of 30 June 65 right about midnight a rocket attack started, we found out soon enough that this was only a diversion. The real targets were our Herkies. They totally destroyed 50042 and 50039 and 56475 was partially destroyed.

There are 2 dolls I bought in Saigon that morning that survived. A mandolin that Terry McKee bought was shot all to pieces when the VC sprayed the plane with burp guns. An interesting fact found out later was that a local sapper team had set up a mock up of the way we parked and had practiced their attack for many days before we were hit. One Air Policeman SSgt Terance Jensen, was guarding our birds and the F-102s on that end of the runway. He was found dead behind his truck. We all survived and were sent back to Naha AB Okinawa on 1 July 1965 to get new planes.

I'm going over to your [VSPA Board](#) and here's a link to the [C130 Hercules Headquarters Board](#) where a lot of us found each other. One more note. When I first got my computer I signed on to AOL and tried to use Blind Bat for my mail, well it was refused as "*already in use*" and that's how I ran into Sam McGowan. He has written several articles about Blind Bat and C-130s and in his BB story he tells of being trained by my squadron.

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We Take Care of Our Own