

Đà Nẵng Air Base

Sapper Mortar Attack, July 1, 1965z by: Tom Winn

Regardless of what else has been said, I know for a fact that SSgt Jensen was the shift (NCO) supervisor the evening of July 1, 1965 of the area where the VC attack occurred.

As was customary, the shift supervisor was taking coffee from post to post and was near the end of the taxi way where alert aircraft [F-102s] were positioned. The C-130s were used as flare aircraft to light up remote posts throughout the northern provinces. They were not there for any super secret, James Bond type operation. SSgt Jensen was driving a Dodge ton and a half, commonly referred to as a six pack. At the time, the Air Force's security mission was being run like a SAC base operation in the states only with relaxed protocol. The Air Police brass was not running the show for jungle warfare, namely, hit and strike and depart as rapidly as possible like the VC did so well.

When the attack first took place it was known the VC had penetrated the base perimeter. SSgt Jensen tried unsuccessfully to open the driver's door to the vehicle, but it wouldn't open. He spent several precious seconds stuck in the vehicle trying to open the driver's door. He may have already taken one round shot through the truck door before he finally actually exited the vehicle.

SSgt Jensen then ran to the rear of the vehicle and crawled under it when a VC came from behind, several seconds later and sprayed him with automatic gun fire. The sentry SSgt Jensen stopped to give coffee to left the immediate area where SSgt Jensen was killed. I really don't know what happened to him or how he responded or reacted during the attack, but I do know he never returned to duty and was immediately returned to his regular PCS duty station stateside. I believe the Airman was TDY from George AFB, CA.

The very day after Sgt. Jensen's death all vehicles with doors had the doors removed and seat belts were installed from side to side to prevent the occupant from falling out of the vehicle. The occupant could easily flip the latch of the seat belt and jump from the vehicle if he had to do so. If the door of the vehicle SSgt Jensen was driving hadn't jammed, he might have had time to exit and take cover in the culvert next to the sentry post. There was a small culvert or ditch between the taxi way and the runway. Also, there were approximately a dozen VC infiltrators who attacked the base that evening. None were known to have been killed or injured. One was captured the following morning by ARVN forces.

I hope this is helpful and informative to whoever is interested in this small, yet important, piece of American history. One of the 52,000+ patriotic, American heroes who were killed during the Vietnam War was an air police staff sergeant who died the evening of July 1, 1965 at the Da Nang Air Base while protecting others.

Regards,

Tom Winn