

Posted by Bob Ventimiglia on Facebook. Who is Bob Ventimiglia? Bob Ventimiglia is on Facebook who posts Seabee Historical Report snippets of various Battalions on the 'All Seabee Vietnam Era' closed group. Not sure what Battalion or unit he was in, probably not 62. (Signed) V/r, Roman. (Roman Hnatowski, EAC, USN, Retired is a revered member of the NMCB 62 Alumni Group.)

August 23, 1968 - At 0300, a rocket/mortar attack occurred in the Red Beach area of Da Nang. Camp Haskins South received 5 rounds of 122mm rockets. Two rockets made direct hits on 2 living huts. One hut was completely destroyed by fire ignited by the rocket; the second hut was damaged beyond repair. Both huts were immediately rebuilt.

The following NMCB-62 casualties were sustained:

BU3 Arthur Lloyd Adams, Jr. KIA
CN Daniel Joseph Bermingham KIA
CN David Allen Fleskes KIA
BU3 Richard Dale Hodges WIA
BU3 Troy William Frazier, Jr. WIA
BU3 Eilba Lamar Bagus WIA
HN Stephen Albert Hatras WIA
CN Ferrell Damon Johns WIA

... Within Camp Haskins, NMCB-62 was assigned responsibility for the defense of the southern sector of the camp defensive perimeter including its 15 bunkers. The average number of personnel manning the bunkers during the night was 45 (2 per bunker from the Security Force and 1 per bunker from the Companies). Each bunker was equipped with an M-60 machine gun, M-79 grenade launcher, 12 gauge shotgun plus individual M-16 rifles. In addition to the security personnel which manned the bunkers and company personnel which manned intermittent fighting holes on the perimeter during Conditions I and II, a 36 man Reaction Platoon from Headquarters Company was used as a stand by blocking force, ready to be deployed to any portion of the perimeter, if required. From January until June 1968, The Security Element consisted of 50 men. Personnel served on Security for 6 to 12 weeks. Three of these personnel served as Sergeant of the Guard and 1 Petty Officer in Charge of Security. One officer was assigned the full time duties of Security Officer. In June, the Security Force was reduced to 36 men and augmented each night with 13 men from the duty section. The duty section men were assigned to bunkers, thereby maintaining a total of 3 men per bunker. The duty section personnel stood the first watch, allowing them to sleep the remainder of the night prior to going to work the next day with their companies. This arrangement was considered very successful and provided nine additional direct labor

personnel for the Battalion. Each night 2 SOG's were on duty and reported to the OOD via the JOOD.

It was necessary to exercise extremely tight fire control, especially on the western portion of the perimeter, due to the Force Logistics Command complex which paralleled Camp Haskins' perimeter 600 meters to the southwest. Friendly villages adjacent to the southern and southwestern perimeter would have been impact areas if rifle and/or machine gun fire had been employed. The same weapons would have been dangerous if employed on the beach section of the perimeter due to the many friendly craft in Da Nang Harbor. The 12 gauge shotgun was therefore found to be very effective against potential pilferers or other indigenous personnel as its range was limited to 50-100 yards. There were very few breaches of this fire control, and fire discipline throughout the deployment was considered outstanding.

The responsibility for manning the Camp Haskins main gate was assigned to the Battalion which occupied Camp Haskins South. Two day gate guards each stood 6 hour watches and checked all vehicles entering or leaving the camp, halting and searching all Foreign National vehicles. At the beginning of the deployment, the Battalion set up the process and commenced securing clearances and ID cards for all Foreign Nationals working on board Camp Haskins. This involved obtaining clearances through the Industrial Relations Office, Da Nang, for approximately 300 Vietnamese Nationals. Temporary passes were not permitted unless they had been properly cleared. These procedures entailed a significant amount of work during the first portion of the deployment, but proved well worth the effort after the security clearance system had been established.

Along with the day time operations of the main gate, 4 men were assigned to the gate at night; 2 stood watches in the bunker adjacent to the main gate, and 2 stood gate watch logging all vehicles entering or leaving camp.

Early in the deployment, there were several instances of men caught sleeping on watch. The only solution to the problem seemed to be for the SOG's, JOOD's and OOD's to frequently tour the defensive perimeter and check the bunkers and personnel, ensuring they were alert, had sufficient coffee, and knew their responsibilities. The men were constantly reminded of the seriousness of the offense of sleeping on watch. Coffee pots were obtained for each bunker and midnight rations delivered to the line each night.

Security control of Red Beach, Da Nang was the responsibility of the Commanding General, Force Logistics Command (FLC) at Camp Books. The Red Beach area was designated as Sub Sector Alpha of the Northern Sector Defense Command (NSDC). If increased security conditions were necessary, NSDC sent this information by radio to all their subordinate units. Early deployment problems in passing the word to all subordinate units were remedied when a hot line radio alert system was established between all subordinate units under NSDC.

A 45 foot water tower converted to a mortar spotting tower was manned every night from 1745 until 0630 by E-5's from the duty section. The mortar siren had a switch located in the mortar tower, which was tripped if any incoming rounds were spotted

anywhere in the Red Beach area. A second switch was located in the Main CP and was used to sound the siren if advance word concerning an attack was received over the radio net. Upon sounding of the siren all personnel proceeded to their nearest mortar hole and remained there until an all clear was passed. A warbling wail of the siren indicated Condition I (infantry attack), during which the perimeter was augmented by Battalion personnel at intermittent fighting holes between bunkers. The mortar tower watch proved invaluable in providing early warning of incoming rounds. As with other Battalions, the biggest problem was impressing upon the men the necessity to remain inside their mortar holes until an all clear was passed. These holes were small, covered, but adequate. After a period of time the inside of these holes became hot, cramped, or stuffy and all too frequently soon after the sound of incoming rounds ceased, personnel began raising their heads out of their mortar holes before an all clear was passed. For a long time, Camp Haskins South never received any incoming rounds within its perimeter. This had a strong influence upon the men, giving them a false sense of security and causing them to become somewhat complacent. Frequent drills, constant reminding, and SOG patrols during mortar/rocket attack alerts were required to keep men in their holes. In the early morning of 23 August, when the Camp came under a rocket attack, the mortar alert had been sounded 5-10 minutes previously, directing the men to their holes during an attack on nearby First Air Cavalry. The incoming lulled, and men had started emerging from their holes when Camp Haskins South suddenly and without warning received five 122mm rockets, killing 3 and wounding 5. No one would have been injured had they remained in their mortar holes. The importance of remaining in mortar holes could not be overemphasized to the men.

Headquarters Company provided the Battalion's mortar crews. Four crews, consisting principally of Engineering Aids, rotated duty on the 2 mortar positions. One crew was the alert crew, the second a standby crew. These crews were very well trained, practiced frequently, and were called upon quite often to provide illumination for Marine patrols.

Soon after arrival in-country, 5 of the existing bunkers were rebuilt and a new bunker was added at the main gate. The bunkers were left in excellent condition with little protective fortification required.

The defensive perimeter was also strengthened by the addition of new fighting holes. Fighting holes were very difficult to construct and maintain in the loose, sandy soil of Red Beach. This problem was overcome by using scrap pieces of M8A1 matting (leftover

from the construction of Project Beaver, the First Air Cavalry's Red Beach helicopter maintenance facility) to construct 3 by 6 foot boxes 4 ½ feet high which were sunk into the berms, sand bagged around the top, and fitted with fighting steps consisting of sand bags inside.

A collateral duty of the Security Officer was the collection and dissemination of intelligence to the Battalion, Third NCB/30th NCR, and Camp Haskins North. The Security

Officer was assisted in this task by a petty officer who spent each day collecting information from various Da Nang units. This information was then compiled and plotted on the intelligence maps in the Battalion Command Post. A Security briefing was given

at 1745 daily in the Battalion Command Post.

The Security Officer was also the Camp Fire Marshall. He was assisted in this task by a Third Class Petty Officer who served as Fire Chief and conducted fire safety inspections and monthly inspections of all camp firefighting equipment/extinguishers; and the Master at Arms Force who manned the fire truck. The fire truck was a modified 5 ton 6 by 6 foot tank truck with a gasoline booster pump using 1 ½ inch hose. It was unsatisfactory for any major fires due to its limited tankage and pump capacity but could control the spread of fire to adjacent structures. After holding a number of drills, the fire crew learned their jobs well, responded rapidly and personnel in the various spaces knew their respective responsibilities. With the exception of a burned out motor and the berthing hut which burned during the 23 August rocket attack, Camp Haskins South had no fires during the 1968 deployment. One lesson learned during the fire caused by the rocket attack was that the normal amount of individual ammunition stored in the berthing spaces made fighting fires impossible once it started “cooking off” and the best that could be hoped for was the spread of fire by wetting down adjacent structures.

High summer temperatures and winds caused rapid evaporation of water in water barrels and water pump extinguishers. These were checked weekly on zone inspections and kept filled by building occupants.

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