

Chapter 6

A Lunch with the TAC Pilots of England AFB

On my different visits to Da Nang AB I would eat my meals at the Officers Club. One day I was sitting there by myself and I noticed some familiar faces of pilots from my home base, England AFB, Louisiana. I went over to their table and joined them for lunch. As we were eating we discussed what each other were doing there in Vietnam. At England AFB our squadrons were flying F-100 Super Sabers. These pilots had transitioned from the F-100's to F-4 Phantoms. They would then typically rotate to a tour of duty at Da Nang AB, Vietnam

A fast forward - On November 20, 2015 I wrote an email to friends including the following: "Today I was listening on the radio about Russian and French air strikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria and how effective they are. Alternatively, the announcer was discussing how anemic was Obama's American air strikes. That triggered my mind to a flashback to 1966 sitting at lunch with some pilots at the Da Nang AB, Vietnam Officers Club. These men were fighter pilots from the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing, England AFB, Louisiana. They had transitioned from our F-100's to F-4's and were flying daily missions over North Vietnam. Their comments about President Johnson's air missions over North Vietnam parallel these Obama 2015 missions over Iraq. "

Now back to the Da Nang Officers Club 1966:

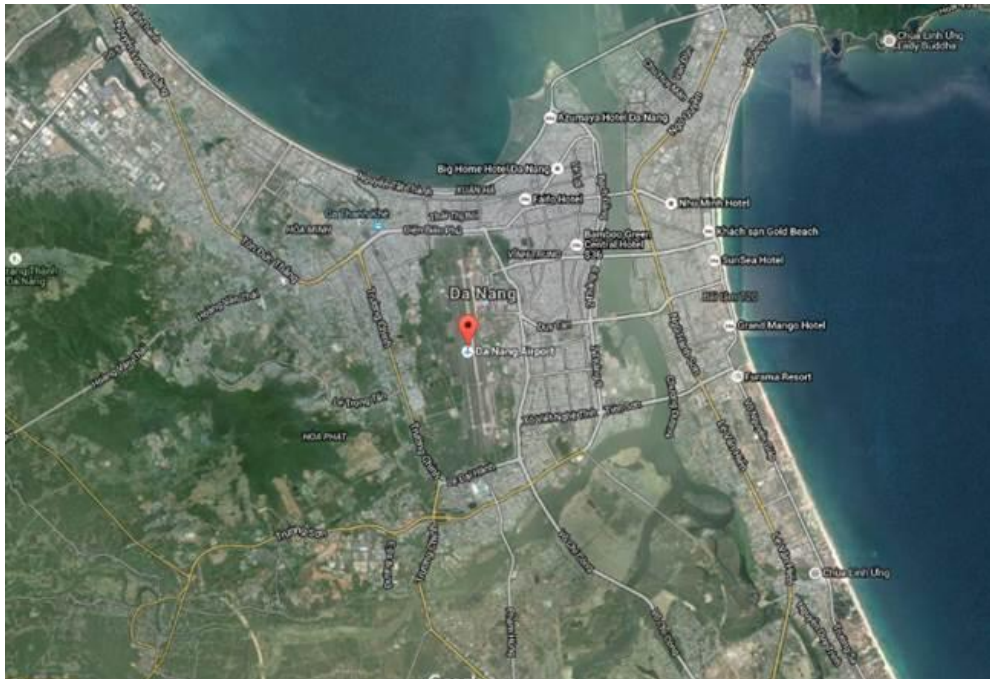
John, this is what our life is like. Each morning we get up and prepare ourselves for a day of flying. We eat breakfast here at the Officers Club and then report to the Squadron Headquarters. We are briefed on the first mission of the day.

Once or twice a day we load out our F-4's with 18,000 pounds of bombs (equivalent to a B-17 bomb load from WWII).

We take off before day break and fly out over the South China Sea gaining altitude. At refueling altitude we meet KC-135's to top off our fuel tanks and prepare for the run through North Vietnam. After refueling we continue to get to maximum altitude as we fly North towards Hai Phong and Hanoi in North Vietnam. We get up to max altitude as we approach North Vietnam. We fly over Hai Phong harbor and we see many great targets, Russian, Chinese and French ships in the harbor, air bases, storage facilities, etc. But, we are not allowed to bomb these targets. We proceed towards Hanoi and as we approach we hit the Air Defense SA-1 missile line (flying telephone poles). Our missile warning systems tell us they have locked on us and are firing volleys of missiles up towards us. We dive down headlong into these upward flying missiles but because of their delayed action fusing our velocity downward allows us to fly through them before they fuse, therefore exploding behind us. At that point we have burned off our altitude and pull out of our dive only to experience their radar guided anti-aircraft guns and hand held missiles. We then pour on the power and gain altitude again to get out of the low level defenses. We then fly north and look for some wooden bridges to drop our ordinance on. They rebuild these bridges overnight so they are always there for us to destroy each day. After we expend our ordinance we again gain altitude and begin our egress. As we approach Hanoi we experience the SA-1 defense line a second time and have to dive down through these upcoming missiles and they explode behind us. As we pull out of our dive we again experience the low altitude radar guided guns and hand held IR missiles weaving our way back through as we again gain

altitude to get out of range of these defenses. We then fly out over the South China Sea to meet with tanker aircraft for refueling and a return flight to DaNang AB. We fly over all the meaningful military targets going in and coming out without attacking them. John, that is our day, every day.

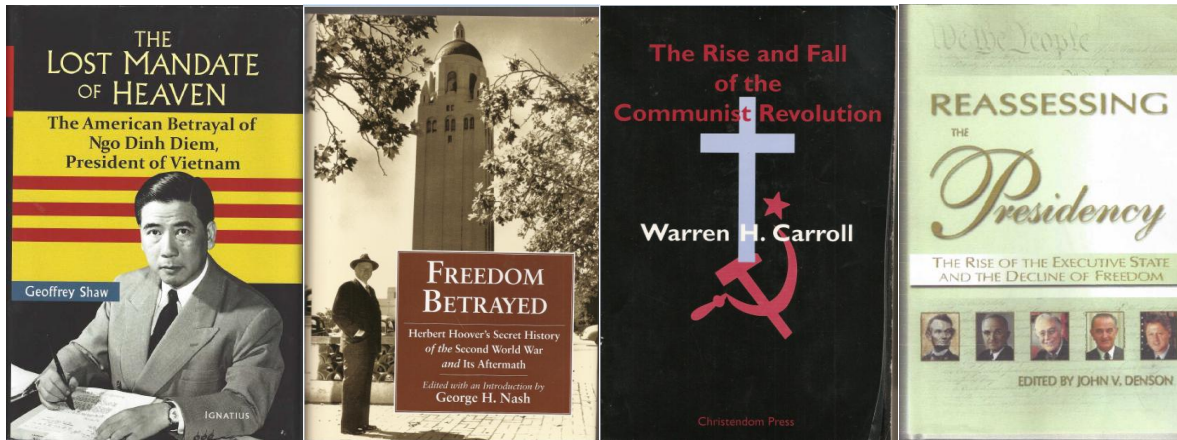
Does this bring to mind what is happening in the Middle East today?



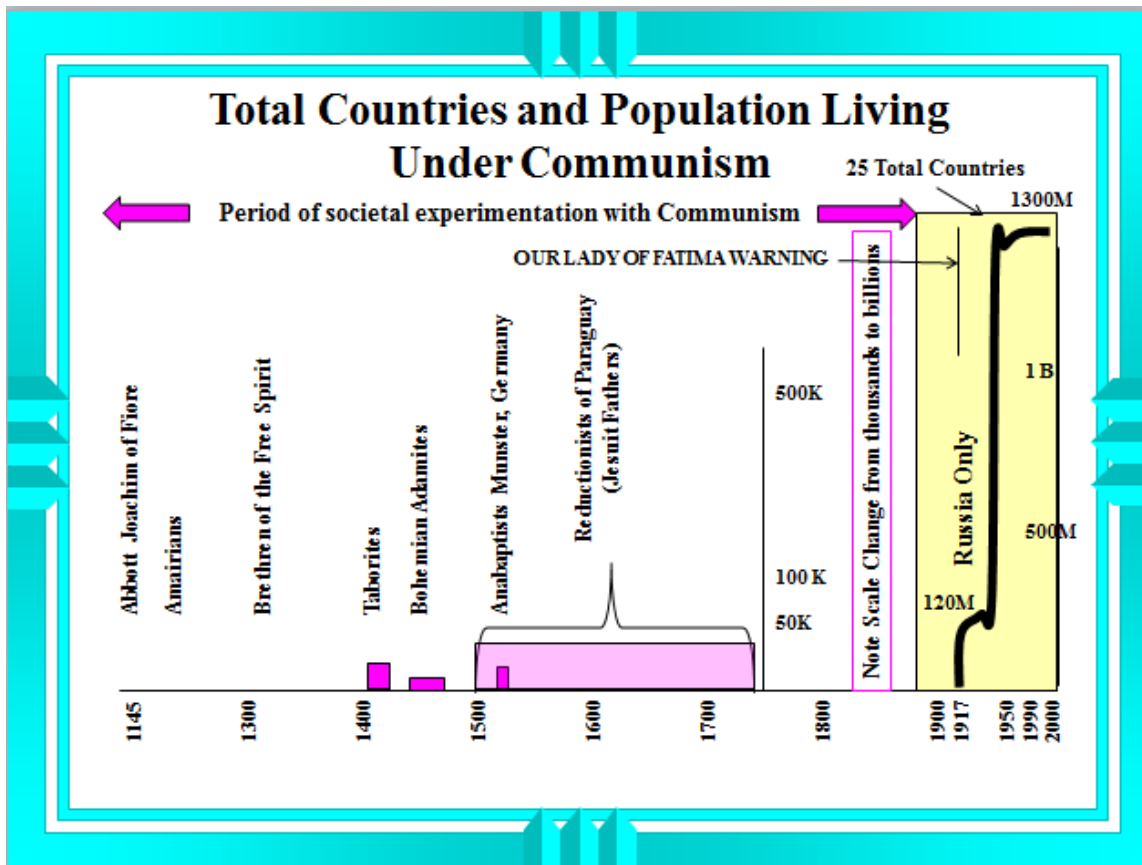
DaNang Vietnam (Presently)

At this point I will hesitate in the description of my experience in Vietnam and give some background that will allow the reader to understand the greater mission or purpose or lack of mission or purpose that America was experiencing here in latter 1966

Following are covers of four books that are instrumental in covering the timeframe and activities of the United States Foreign Policy in this area of the world during WWII to the Vietnam War. Of course these books were not available to read in 1966. Needless to say our involvement can be described as "Ham Handed" or intently pro-Communist in nature. We did not live up to our Freedom and Liberty for the people motto that we pride ourselves with.



As Herbert Hoover says in "Freedom Betrayed" we entered WWII with one country and 120,000,000 people living under Communist rule and we exited WWII with 21 countries and 1,300,000,000 people living under Communism (see figure below). Who Won? How did that happen? Is our Foreign Policy and our State Department that inept, or was there an agenda here? Did we help the Communist Revolution in the world, or are we opposed to the Communistic Revolution? Over and over again since the turn of the 20th Century until the end of the 1980's the United States made decisions that supported nefarious forces in the world resulting in the strengthening of the Communist Movement. For 700 years Communism was just a bothersome bad idea. And then in just a thirty or so years it becomes a massive threat to humanity.



The same advisors to the President were assisting President Kennedy in Indochina as were advising President Roosevelt and President Truman on his Eastern Europe and China policies at the end of WWII. The books "The Lost Mandate of Heaven" By Geoffrey Shaw and "The Rise and Fall of the Communist Revolution" By Warren H. Carroll describe the conditions leading up America's participation in the Vietnam War. W. Averell Harriman had completed negotiations the "Neutralization"

. In November 1963 the United States CIA assisted in the overthrow of the Diem Presidency of Vietnam and the killing of Diem and his brother. This led to instability within the country which was still being experienced in 1966. (Three weeks later John Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas.)