



FASU. Da Nang

It isn't much to look at, just a nondescript, barn-like metal building sitting at the end of the runway. The only thing that distinguishes it from the other warehouses and sheds in the area is a small blue and yellow sign on the sliding door. Inside, the facilities are spartan — two picnic-type benches, a luggage rack and a bare concrete floor.

But to thousands of Navy men, the Fleet Air Support Unit (FASU) passenger terminal at Da Nang, RVN, is as welcome a sight as JFK or Los Angeles International Airport.

They come wandering in at all hours of the day and night, wearing blues, dungarees, combat greens or whites. Most of them are tired and weary from traveling. Many of them are bewildered. A few are scared. All of them want transportation.

They may have to wait a day or two but eventually get the flight they want — thanks to the hard-working enlisted men who staff the terminal.

The terminal is operated by FASU,

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but the men who work there are attached to the Air Terminal Division, NAS Cubi Point, R.P. The Cubi Point Navy men, who volunteer for the job at Da Nang, began working in the terminal on a rotating basis in October 1969 when the Navy halted direct flights between Cubi Point and ships off Vietnam and started moving personnel via Da Nang.

The work in Da Nang can be described as fatiguing. The men are on their feet an average of 18 hours a day trying to keep up with the workload. During April, for example, the five-man terminal crew handled 2,039 passengers — and that doesn't include those traveling on emergency leave orders.

The terminal workers never know how many passengers they will have from one day to the next, or when they will arrive. On a typical day, four

Navy men walk into the terminal seeking transportation to Cubi Point. Within four hours, 30 others have showed up with the same request. None of them were expected, but all are accommodated.

"That's the way it always is," says AB2 William C. Miller. "Your passenger backlog can jump from 10 to 100 in an hour."

EO1 John W. Ludlum, who is currently the leading petty officer at the terminal, points out that all of the passengers are in a hurry. "Some of them don't realize the problems involved in getting transportation. They think they can walk up to the counter, put their names on the list and go. Unfortunately it doesn't work that way. We're not TWA."

The bulk of FASU's passengers are traveling to and from Seventh Fleet ships off the coast of Vietnam. This means flying in the C-1A *Trader* or in unscheduled helicopters launched and recovered aboard carriers in the area. When configured for passengers, the



C-1 can carry only eight persons; configured for mail and cargo — which normally takes priority — there is room for only one passenger.

Consequently, if the terminal has 25 or 30 persons waiting for transportation to a particular ship, they have to wait a day or two to get to their destination, depending upon the amount of mail and cargo scheduled for delivery to the fleet.

Most of the shuttle flights between Da Nang and the carriers are flown by VRC-50's detachment in Da Nang, but each carrier on Yankee Station usually sends one plane into Da Nang every day for passengers, mail and cargo. Helicopters are also sent if the backlog of passengers on the ships or in Da Nang is quite heavy.

To get passengers to other destinations such as Saigon, Cubi Point, Japan or the United States, the terminal crew makes use of anything available — scheduled and unscheduled Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps flights.

PO Ludlum and his co-workers try to make the wait for flights as brief and painless as possible. "Guys coming through here have it kind of rough," he says. "They don't know where to go, what to do or how to do it. There's

no snack bar, no comfortable seats, and the passengers can't leave the area. So, all that's left is to sit around, play cards or sleep on the floor."

AB2 Miller explains that there are a dining hall, club and transient barracks within the compound. But the club and mess are open only at certain hours, and most passengers are reluctant to go to the transient quarters for fear of missing a plane.

"Quite a few of our passengers will sleep on the floor here in the terminal rather than go to the barracks and risk missing a flight," Miller says.

To make waiting a little more bearable, the terminal crew acquired a coffee pot, a supply of coffee and paper cups. They also installed a refrigerator in their small office and now sell cold and sometimes not-so-cold soda.

The terminal crewmen also have newspapers, books, magazines and a couple of decks of cards on hand.

"Most Navy men going through FASU in Da Nang expect something that at least looks like an air terminal," Miller states. "It doesn't, but one way or another, we get a flight for everyone who walks in here, and that's what counts."

A metal building on the edge of the runway is the Da Nang passenger terminal. Above left, AB2 William C. Miller, FASU, helps passengers into life jackets. In a familiar scene, above, AB2 Ronald A. Quinn announces the passenger list for the next scheduled flight, one of eight daily. And below, Navy men en route to Seventh Fleet ships prepare to board a VRC-50 C-1A.

