



Da Nang Diary: A Forward Air Controller's Gunsight View of Flying with SOG

By Thomas Yarborough



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Originally published in 1991, this classic work has now been revised and updated with additional photos, many of them in color. It is the story of how, in Vietnam, an elite group of Air Force pilots fought a secret air war in Cessna 0-2 and OV-10 Bronco prop planes—flying as low as they could get. The eyes and ears of the fast-moving jets who rained death and destruction down on enemy positions, the forward air controller made an art form out of an air strike—knowing the targets, knowing where friendly troops were, and reacting with split-second, life-and-death decisions as a battle unfolded.

The expertise of the low, slow FACs, as well as the hazard attendant to their role, made for a unique bird's-eye perspective on how the entire war in Vietnam unfolded. For Tom Yarborough, who logged 1,500 hours of combat flying time, the risk was constant, intense, and electrifying. A member of the super-secret "Prairie Fire" unit, Yarborough became one of the most frequently shot-up pilots flying out of Da Nang—engaging in a series of dangerous secret missions in Laos. In this work, the reader flies in the cockpit alongside Yarborough in his adrenaline-pumping chronicle of heroism, danger, and wartime brotherhood. From the rescuing of downed pilots to taking out enemy positions, to the most harrowing extended missions directly overhead of the NVA, here is the dedication, courage and skill of the fliers who took the war into the enemy's backyard.

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Editorial Review

Review

Many SOG veterans -- including myself -- are alive today thanks to the courage, flying skill and determination of Col. Yarborough and his fellow Covey FAC pilots. His personal account captures the spirit of those harrowing days when we Green Berets, deep behind enemy lines in Laos -- no matter how dire the situation -- only needed to hear Covey's approaching engines to know all was not lost. Congratulations on telling your story -- and our story -- so well. (*John L. Plaster, Team Leader, Recon Team California, MACV-SOG, author of "SOG" and "Secret Commandos"*)

From telephone booths on the Ho Chi Minh Trail to dangerous emergency landings at abandoned Khe Sanh, you can almost see the explosions of marker rockets and smell the avgas in DA NANG DIARY, this intimate account of a Forward Air Controller working with the Special Forces on their secret operations in South Vietnam and Laos. Yarborough's vivid picture of staging the air missions that inserted SOG teams where they were needed is the only one of its kind. Don't miss it! (*John Prados, noted Vietnam War historian and author of Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975*)

As Covey 580 and a former Prairie Fire FAC, I can definitely identify with Tom Yarborough's saga. Da Nang Diary is a riveting, authentic story that has never been told until now. Yarborough takes you into the cockpit as he flies his dangerous top secret missions in support of covert reconnaissance teams operating in Laos. This memoir is very personal, honest, and insightful---and one of the best books about FACs ever written. A gripping read! (*General Ralph "Ed" Eberhart, USAF (Ret), former commander of NORAD, U.S. Space Command, and Air Combat Command*)

"At last, after four decades, we can finally recognize some of the Vietnam War's most intrepid warriors, the courageous Covey FACs who supported SOG reconnaissance teams on their top-secret missions into Laos and Cambodia. The dramatic true stories in Da Nang Diary fill a major gap in special operations history. This is a "must-read" for all warriors and a book to place on the shelf next to John Plaster's SOG: The Secret Wars of America's Commandos in Vietnam." (*Major General John K. Singlaub, USA (Ret), former commander of SOG and author of Hazardous Duty*)

Col. Tom Yarborough adds another heroic chapter to the literature of America's experience in Vietnam with his detailed, impeccably researched memoir of his year as a Prairie Fire FAC flying for CCN. Whether supporting SOG teams deep in Laos, rescuing downed helicopter pilots in the DMZ, or destroying deadly enemy anti-aircraft positions along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, for Tom Yarborough the danger associated with flying for SOG was constant, intense, and electrifying. Da Nang Diary is the ultimate through-the-gunsight view of covert operations in Vietnam. Told with a powerful immediacy that puts the reader in the cockpit, Da Nang Diary is a book that should and must be read by all warriors. (*The Drop, Special Forces Association*)

"...takes the reader along on a number of missions, taking out the enemy threat, and picking up down pilots. Take it from one who "was there, done that" this book is worth reading as it sheds light on an aspect of the Southeast Asia air war that was not often discussed. (*Daedalus Flyer*)

Excellent account by a warrior-soldier in the tradition of Carl von Clausewitz and TE Lawrence. Yarborough's account brought back memories of my tour as an AF intelligence officer assigned to HQ 7/13

from October 1970 to October 1971. I remember briefing many of these operations from Son Tay through Lam Son 719. Fabulous book...riveting, thoughtful account. (*Earl Tilford author, Crosswinds: The Air Force's Setup in Vietnam*)

Highly decorated Author Tom Yarborough deflects all credit to others while assuring accuracy through extensive research of this incredible military history. There are many current day BIO's of the characters in the book that I found extremely interesting. Da Nang Diary has my highest recommendation. (*Military Writers Society of America*)

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About the Author

Colonel Tom Yarborough, USAF (ret.), served in the Air Force for thirty years in a variety of flying and staff assignments. A command pilot, during his two Vietnam tours as a forward air controller, he earned thirty combat decorations, including the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart, Air Medal, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. He currently lives in Springfield, Virginia, where he maintains ties to the academic community as an adjunct history professor at Northern Virginia Community College.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Rita Hackett:

What do you regarding book? It is not important to you? Or just adding material when you want something to explain what the one you have problem? How about your spare time? Or are you busy person? If you don't have spare time to accomplish others business, it is make you feel bored faster. And you have time? What did you do? Everybody has many questions above. They have to answer that question simply because just their can do that will. It said that about book. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is suitable. Because start from on pre-school until university need this specific Da Nang Diary: A Forward Air Controller's Gunsight View of Flying with SOG to read.

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