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WORKERS LEAVE RICE FIELDS, CAPTURE ENEMY PILOT

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During the evening meeting of Company 6 members of Cooperative C of Vinh Linh heatedly discussed one problem: should they use "ton ganh" [a type of flat carrying pole with rounded ends] or "don xoc" [round bamboo carrying pole with pointed ends] to carry rice?

Having waited until everyone had expressed his opinion, Tran Su, a unit leader, expressed his:

"Using wooden carrying poles with pointed ends is better because we have to follow trenches now as we carry rice in from the field. As we have to go in trenches, the neater our method of carrying rice, the better. Moreover, when enemy pilots parachute down, 'don xoc' is a weapon easy to take along and wonderful for hand-to-hand combat."

Tran Su's opinion was unanimously accepted. Therefore in the morning on Bau Lu, Bau O, and Bau Lang one saw everywhere "don xoc" with one end planted into the ground, the other end pointed toward the sky, making the ricefields look like spike fields. The rice was golden ripe, dotted with green spots of rice that were not quite ripe. Around the fields eight machinegun crews were guarding the sky, ready to open fire. Anything could happen during this planned harvest time.

Everyone was cutting rice when the enemy planes came and launched rockets all over the place. Five rockets fell on the corner of the courtyard of Principal Thang. Harvesters in Bau O retreated into air raid shelters. Our guns in the west fired back at the enemy. Village unit leader Tac was standing in an advantageous position observing and commanding.

Suddenly he shouted: "Enemy pilot!" In another direction the militia also called: "Where's Que? Stop harvesting and bring the light machinegun to 20 [probably a position]."

Huong, Van oang, Thiu, and Nau all stopped their work took their "don xoc" and guns and rushed toward the parachute. They raced with the Village C militia. In the air, six F-4's flew in at different altitudes. One flew low to entice our fire and enable those airplanes above it to detect the parachuting pilot. The militia's guns from various rice piles fired crisply, detained the enemy, and let our people advance to CT. Seeing that it was difficult to control the ground, the enemy called in two more reconnaissance planes, one VO-10A and an AD-6. They maliciously fired continuous signal shells for the six F-4 to strafe the hillsides. Bomb and rocket smoke was thick in the area. The communication trench from Thoi's house to Unit 5 was flattened at many places. The situation was tense. The enemy aggressively performed a maneuver hoping to rescue the downed pilot who was trying to escape. Huu's voice was heard reporting to village unit leader Tac:

"The downed airplane is a F-105. The pilot came down 100 meters from CT. Hoa's cell is advancing toward that place but the trench is blocked. The bombs explode continuously. Can't cross yet."

Tac assigned duties:

"CL Company remain to harvest, BA Company send a platoon with a stretcher to CT. The cannon cell prepare to meet helicopters if and when they come. Machineguns follow the same plans. All forces continue their activities."

Uncle Dai, Uncle Chu, with bamboo strings under their arms, also followed the militia. Uncle Thang reminded everybody: "Bring lots of bamboo strings so that wherever you run into the enemy, just tie him up."

The friendly units in the east opened fire in support. The enemy began to become confused. The eight machine gun crews of Village C were also mobilized to the battlefield. The firing surrounded the sky pirates. The militia who were after the downed pilot ran as fast as they could. Xuan, deputy political officer of the village unit, waded across a puddle and got all wet but still tried to keep his gun dry. Deputy village unit leader Kham had suffered a sudden stomach ache the night before, yet now he was running just as fast as the time he was pursuing the French troops at Ba Binh Post years ago.