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U.S. TROOPS KILLED IN DAY-LONG BATTLE

[Article; Hanoi, Quan Doi Nhan Dan, Vietnamese, 22 October 1968, p 2]

Xuan's cell, consisting of six members and commanded by deputy platoon leader Nguyen Xuan Lam, was positioned on an elevation to waylay the enemy, who often ventured out of his position on Mount Ngang in the hope of breaking the siege. Carrying out their assignment, Xuan and Thang had secretly gone downhill to ambush the enemy. Up since 0300, Xuan had consolidated the fortifications, rechecked the camouflage, and cleaned the guns so as to be ready to vie with the enemy. Though having never participated directly in combat since he joined the army, Xuan felt extremely calm and relaxed.

At 0730, the sun was already far above the horizon. Suddenly, heavy steps were heard coming from the direction of P.S. Xuan remembered the resolution made by the cell not to open fire until the enemy came real close, then attack with the certitude of victory and kill the enemy right in front of the entrenchment.

In accordance with the plan, Xuan let the Americans pass. One, two, three -- there were 19. Xuan calmly counted them one by one. He waited until Thang, positioned about 30 meters away, discharged a submachinegun salvo, then fired and killed on the spot the American commander who was carrying an M.79, then three others, just about 5 meters from Xuan's entrenchment. Intercepted and heavily struck while in formation, the Americans moved back and screamed in panic. They hadn't located Xuan because his entrenchment, though close by, was very well camouflaged. Xuan was elated, but still said to himself: "Don't be subjective, stay calm!"

He raised his submachinegun and his accurate shots killed several fleeing Americans one by one. The survivors became more panicky and, jostling with each other, rushed toward the pass to Mount Ngang. Standing in his entrenchment and brushing aside the reeds in front of him, Xuan clearly saw four frightened Americans hurrying from the thick forest toward the open space on the hill scattered with a few myrtle bushes. With their rifles, they signaled a low flying HU-1A nearby to land and rescue them. Unfortunately, they were not recognized and a rocket fired by the helicopter killed all four of them.

The first phase of the battle ended. Half an hour later, after reconsolidating their formation, the Americans organized their second thrust into our area of operation. They attacked from three directions with the intention of encircling the area where Xuan and Thang were positioned. Enemy automatic rifles fired long salvos. A group of four Americans unsuspectingly drew near Xuan's entrenchment. He aimed and fired at one with a handset who fell and writhed. Xuan fired three more shots and damaged the manpack radio of the second American walking behind. The latter, terror struck, ran away quickly without looking back. The third one had located Xuan and raised his rifle. He was only 5 meters from Xuan, but the latter was quicker and a burst of his submachinegun instantly killed the enemy who had no time to pull the trigger. The fourth one, stooping with the intention of firing a grenade with his M.79, was also shot to death by Xuan.

Xuan continued to fight calmly and saved his ammunition. His reliance on his fellow combatants grew stronger, because uphill deputy platoon leader Lam continued to give him machine-gun fire support each time the Americans rushed down from the "Elephanthead" mountain.

The battle dragged on until 150. Five attack waves were repelled and the Americans had to retreat. Though affected by bomb blasts and very tired, Xuan still exerted himself to climb up to collect booty. Turning over enemy bodies, he picked up one automatic rifle, one M79, two cases of ammunition, one tape recorder, one pair of binoculars, and two photo cameras.

So in his first battle against the Americans, Xuan achieved brilliant deeds by killing 12 of the enemy on the spot and wounding many others, thus making a worthy contribution to the cell's success in repelling one U.S. company, killing 32 of the enemy and capturing large quantities of weapons and military equipment in one day.