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CON CO ISLAND SCORES TWO-DAY VICTORY AGAINST U.S.

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Early on the morning of 16 October, the fog was still thick over Con Co Island and all preparatory work for a new day of combat had already been done. All cadres, soldiers up in the observation tower, on gun mounts as well as those in the commanding bunker holding firmly the scout position of the country day and night, all are ready to open fire to destroy the enemy. The day before, at the commemorative moment of the sacrifice of the war hero Nguyen Van Troi (15 October), soldiers of the island in each combat position all looked toward the beloved mainland, toward the South and swore to open fire to cut down the airplanes of the American bandits. All combat preparation was done quickly and accurately. The sky was getting lighter, the sea surface was rough with waves. The observation soldiers looked over the whole sky above the island. Nguyen Hong Tien, detachment Deputy Political Officer and detachment Deputy Leader Dinh Van Ky checked once more all combat plans:

"There's an enemy airplane, Southeast!"

One U.S. helicopter flying close to the sea surface was immediately spotted by the soldiers on the island. Everyone got in his combat position, grabbing the opportunity to destroy the enemy. The low flying helicopter approached closer. This was the first time it flew that low. But the commanding comrades had acted very efficiently and chose the exact time to open fire. The helicopter was already well in the telescopic lens. There was the order to fire. Immediately fire from the guns on the island rushed forth and exploded on the helicopter. It rose up a little, then crashed down, splashing up the water and sank right on the spot. It was then 6:40 AM. The victory took place

quickly. The entire island was filled with joy and again they began a new combat.

Exactly 10 minutes later, two F.100 airplanes followed by an amphibious airplane ready to rescue pilot, aggressively approached and fired crazily at the island. But the battlefield which had experienced over 1,000 days and nights of illustrious fighting and brilliant victories once again threw out the fire net over the enemy. Detachment Deputy Leader Dinh Van Ky jumped up on the fortification wall among bombs and fire to command the fighting. Following the example of hero Thai Van A, distance observers Thai Vinh Noan and Le Kim Hong scorned the enemy fire, discovered all flying patterns of the enemy planes, and informed their fellow soldiers to fire. One F.100 which just came forth was immediately hit. It burst into flames, and crashed into the ocean not far from where the helicopter fell. The pilot sank with the airplane. The rest of the airplanes panicked and fled. At nearly 7:30 the enemy again sent over F.4's, F.100's and F.105's to bomb and strafe the island continually. They dropped masses of bombs on the island and the sea. The soldiers, the more they fought, the more they were determined to destroy the enemy. Gunner Gruong Cong was buried under dirt; he got himself up and continued to fight. Guncrew Leader Nguyen Viet Hung passed out. When he regained consciousness he immediately joined his friends and again opened fire at the U.S. aircraft. Cooks Tran Luong, Luu Van Sat, and Nguyen Van Nuoi made one trip after another across the battlefield under a rain of bombs and bullets to supply the gunners with water. Another F.4 was hit and fell headfirst near the island. The rest of them fled in all directions. Thus within an hour, the soldiers of Con Co Island had accomplished another brilliant victory, downing 3 U.S. airplanes around the island.

On 20 October, the heroic soldiers of Con Co Island entered the battle earlier than the last time. They are firmer in the new battle. At the crack of dawn, over Vinh Linh, a U.S. F.4 was hit and burst into flames. Both the airplane and the parachuting pilot fell near the island.

"All troops prepare to destroy American airplanes coming to rescue their pilot!"

The order resounded over the island. The soldiers were all ready to accomplish a new victory to join with the victory of the soldiers in the mainland. Just as anticipated, one U.S. helicopter crept in. Gunners Hoang Bich Hien, Le Si Te, Le Van Doan quickly follow the enemy closely. After only one barrage, the American helicopter crashed and sank on the spot near where

the F.4 had just fallen. Suffering a heavy defeat, they gathered up the F.4's, A.4's, AD.6's and came roaring in to attack. The fighting was fierce. The soldiers on the little heroic island fought very cleverly. Gunner Nguyen Van Thao who had been in the army less than 6 months moved ammunition continuously under enemy bombs. Gunner Nguyen Tien Chat, Tran Van Khuong, Nguyen Trong Quynh, Cao Van Trung together fired very accurately. One F.4 was hit and crashed headfirst into the ocean.

That night on the faraway island the soldiers of Con Co felt extremely touched and encouraged when they received the complimentary letter from Ho Chu Tich broadcast on Voice of Vietnam. Uncle Ho praised the soldiers and cadres of the island for "having fought courageously, cleverly and having achieved a wonderful victory." Within one hour they downed 3 airplanes. By the time Uncle Ho's letter reached the island, the soldiers had already achieved a new victory to send to the mainland: 2 more U.S. airplanes in one battle had been shot down.

Honored and enthusiastic, the soldiers and cadres of Con Co Island are even more determined to fight to the end, ready to destroy every scheme of the Americans to be worthy of being the country's little heroic island.

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