

III. "COC BAI ANOTHER BLOW AT VIETNAMIZATION" - LPA

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A new glorious victory has just been added to the battle record of the people's liberation armed forces in Quang Tri-Thua Thien-Hue area (Central Viet-Nam).

After over 60 days (August 6 - October 7) of continual and fierce attacks on the U.S. "O'Reilly" base in Coc Bai area, west of Hue, the liberation fighters heavily decimated the Saigon Army 1st Regiment, wiping out over 1,000 enemy troops, shot down or destroyed on the ground 71 aircraft, smashed 14 artillery pieces, many fortifications, bunkers, storages and a large quantity of war materials.

On eight occasions they heavily trounced four battalions of that regiment and captured many enemy troops together with a big haul of weapons.

The remaining troops had to flee from the area.

Following the victorious attacks on the U.S. "Ripcord" base on Hill 935 and the puppets' "Barnet" base respectively in late July and mid-September, the Coc Bai victory is the third blow dealt within less than three months at the U.S. and puppet troops in their defense perimeter in the mountain area west of Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces where the enemy had mustered mobile mainforces for a "forward defense" and to support the "pacification" forces.

The Coc Bai base is a big one lying 42km northwest of Hue city, on a 565-meter hill provided with a system of fortifications, brick houses and bunkers surrounded by trenches, barbed wire and mine fields. An artillery battalion was encamped just close to the infantry. Strict patrol was conducted over the area in day time by puppet troops and American aircraft, and at night flares were fired up from the position and down from the planes of the U.S. 101st airborne division and nine nearby artillery sites stood ready to rescue Coc Bai in any eventuality.

With such a strong support and defense, the puppet 1st division commanders boasted Coc Bai as a "model" position of great military and political significance, and voiced their determination to hold it.

However, under the powerful blows and tight siege by the PLAF since August 6, the remnants of the 1st regiment--the "pet boy" and "crack unit" of the Saigon army--had to leave Coc Bai,

By kicking the paratroops out of "Ripcord" base, the puppet 3rd regiment troops out of "Barnet" base and the puppet 1st regiment troops out of "O'Reilly" base, the Tri-Thien-Hue PLAF have repeatedly breached the U.S. puppets' defense perimeter, foiled their "forward defense" and "pacification" of the war program in this area.

All told, the PLAF attacks on these three important bases resulted in over 4,300 enemy troops wiped out, one U.S. paratroop brigade and one puppet main force regiment heavily decimated, nine battalions and 20 companies put out of action or seriously decimated, and about 200 aircraft downed or destroyed on the ground.

Far from warding off the PLAF with their "forward defense" tactics, the enemy were assaulted in their rear bases, Hqs, and important strategic logistic compounds while the "pacification" forces were constantly harassed.

While the puppet troops were kept under siege in Da Ban and Coc Bai in August and September, a series of headquarters and bases of the U.S. 101st airborne division and the puppet 1st division, and many "strategic hamlets," "Civil guard" and "militia posts" in Cua area and the coastal areas of southern Quang Tri and south and north of Hue came under repeated attacks. In August alone, the PLAF and people of Tri-Thien-Hue wiped out nearly 500 U.S. and puppet troops in their very lairs, in various towns, townships and provincial capitals.

With the exploits on Hill 935 and in Da Ban, the Coc Bai victory once again brought to failure the enemy's tactics of counter-attacking the PLAF by means of setting enclaves on the hills besides conducting around them infantry searches and artillery shellings and air bombings. It also foiled the "heliborne" tactics and the "U.S. firepower plus Saigon infantry" formula, as a large number of enemy planes were grounded both by day and by night either when landing or helilifting troops, carrying supplies or evacuating wounded and dead.

American B-52, B-57, jet planes and armed helicopters rained on Coc Bai thousands of tons of bombs and shells in the hope of relieving the siege for the beleaguered puppet troops, but to no avail,

The Coc Bai victory is a clear demonstration of the resolve of the Tri-Thien-Hue PLAF to fight and to win, their continual offensive and their staunch combativeness, in defiance of all hardships and obstacles.

The U.S. aggressors have time and again boasted that their "Vietnamization of the war" plan had yielded good results in the "first tactical area" where Tri-Thien-Hue is located and that the puppet troops were now able to assume the main operational tasks.

But how can the Saigon puppet troops fight on their own when the U.S. troops have sustained one defeat after another and are trying to shift the burden of the war on the puppet army? No wonder that anti-war actions, desertion, suicide, self-injury, protest against raiding orders have become common occurrences within the Saigon army.

Obviously, the U.S. puppets' setbacks at Coc Bai, Da Ban, on Hill 935 and in other parts of Tri-Thien-Hue have aggravated the enemy's defensive and passive position in the whole area.