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DOWNING OF U.S. PLANES DESCRIBED

[Article by Hong Khanh and Van Giao; Hanoi, Nhan Dan,
Vietnamese, 27 October 1968, p 3]

As quick as gibbons the three young men from T Village (Vinh Linh) climbed the mountain and stopped midway. Ho Viet hid himself beside a bush and raised his hands to clear the branches slowly, the leaves of which had just been curled like bean skins due to the bomb shock waves. He stood and looked at another mountain. In front of him, amidst the grey smoke caused by the bombs unloaded by B-52's, which gradually cleared, the 2 reconnaissance planes OV-10A were balancing their silver wings, making smaller and smaller circles and following one another closely and noisily. Occasionally the RF-100 made deep dives as if it wanted to clear all the smoke, dust, and dry leaves which were floating low in the sky.

For three consecutive crops Ho Viet has been appointed village unit assistant chief by the villagers. Many a time he lost appetite and sleep when the American aggressors came to attack their hilly land. Even the beating of the wings of a wild beast which flew in the darkness of the night made him awake and he kept listening. He wouldn't ignore the hissing of the enemy plane if it sounded unfamiliar to him. The villagers' concern is also his. But he never saw the American aggressors so cruel as they are today. Since this morning their B-52 bombers came over six times to unload bombs all over these few mountains. The bomb holes on the hilly land had just been filled up a few days ago by the villagers who rebuilt their straight rows of manioc. Now these rows looked completely red and were covered with stones and dirt. A herd of buffaloes, whose backs are level like elephant's backs, was grazing at the foot of the mountain. One of them suddenly fell down. An old villager fell beside his bed and never rose up again. His

mouth was still holding a smoking cigarette. The American aggressors destroyed everything from a newly woven and unsmoked basket for rice transportation and a brandnew plow to a rattan and a tuft of leaves to make hats. After each series of explosions made by bombs from B-52 bombers, their reconnaissance planes immediately came over for inspection. What were they up to now? Whatever they did, the people of Van Kieu would never surrender to the Americans. The village is still there! The mountains and forests are still there! If the leaves of the forests could not be entirely swept away, then the people of Van Kieu would never give up fighting. The American aggressors must pay for their crimes. The people of Van Kieu must aim right in their faces and pull the trigger as Ho Duc did and move swiftly forward like the villagers of Ta Oi and like our compatriots in the South! Ho Viet stood motionless. He rounded his eyes without blinking, but in his mind several schemes had been designed.

As for Ho Pha Ret, he was sitting at the foot of a tree cleaning a trigger guard and rifle butt. He put his mouth close to the sight and made a strong blow. His rifle, made dusty by the B-52 bombing, was now well cleaned and polished. Ho Ta Nhui was sitting with his legs stretched out on the dry grass loading bullets into the magazines of the light machinegun. These bullets were polished like the blades of a jungle knife. Ho Ta Nhui and Ho Ta Phet have enlisted in the militia for two crop seasons. Several times they crossed springs and climbed passes together with young boys and girls of the village in order to fight American aggressors. However, every time they held their rifles they cleaned them again and again and handled them carefully as if they were precious things. Both were working attentively when they heard the brusque voice of Village Unit Assistant Chief Ho Viet:

"Hurry up, boys! The Americans are coming in groups!"

Like a pair of squirrels Ho Ta Nhui and Ho Ta Vet took up their weapons and ran immediately to their fighting positions. But as soon as they put their weapons on the wooden supports, Ho Viet, fearing that they would fire too soon, ordered:

"Just wait -- wait until they come close before you start firing. Shoot them as we shoot a ferocious tiger in the jungle and hit them with our first bullets. This type of helicopter carries many Americans and cannot fly as fast as jets. Take a shorter predicted distance before shooting. Don't forget!"

Now the three helicopters arrived noisily. They approached slowly in V-formation the mountain which Ho Viet was in front of, then changed to a line formation, and finally started to make circles as if they wanted to land. The Americans thought that nobody could survive on the area which had just been attacked six times by B-52 bombers, and where the trees and grass were still burning and the fire and dust were still dancing in the valley. Yet when the third helicopter made a turn, its big dipper-shaped body lay in front of the sights of our infantrymen's rifles. At the same time it was hit by four rifle bullets and six machinegun bullets fired by three militiamen from T Village. The helicopter roared loudly like a tiger who had fallen into a trap. Its horizontal propellers, which were spinning fast and noisily, suddenly slackened their speed and stopped. In spite of its efforts it continued to plunge its scoop-shaped head downward and crashed on the land where the bombers had just come to commit their crimes. The remaining helicopters dared not turn back. They hurriedly climbed upward and fled. The reconnaissance planes OV-10A and RF-100 also took to flight.

The battle lasted a very short time -- less than two minutes. It was on the afternoon of the same day last year that troops and civilians of Vinh Linh for the first time shot down two American B-52 bombers.

CSO: 3520-P