

# WOMEN IN ZONE VI VIETNAM IN COMBAT IN THE WAR AGAINST THE US 1954 - 1975

Tran Thi Thuy Nga Email: Tran6111@scientifictext.ru

*Tran Thi Thuy Nga - Master, Lecturer,  
FACULTY OF POLITICAL THEORY,  
DALAT UNIVERSITY, DALAT, SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM*

**Abstract:** during the war against the US, women played a significant role in the struggles, especially in mobilizing soldiers. Since the establishment of the VI Zone to the signing of the Paris Agreement, women have always been the leading force in political struggle and mobilization of soldiers. This article summarizes the military warfare of women in Zone 6 during the war against the US (1954 - 1975). The women's contributions in this field contributed significantly to the final victory of the war against the US in the area.

**Keywords:** soldiers, mobilization of soldiers, women's struggle.

## ЖЕНЩИНЫ В ЗОНЕ VI ВЬЕТНАМА В БОЕВЫХ ДЕЙСТВИЯХ В ВОЙНЕ ПРОТИВ США 1954 - 1975 гг.

Чан Тхи Туи Нга

*Чан Тхи Туи Нга - магистр, преподаватель,  
факультет политической теории,  
Далат университет, г. Далат, Социалистическая Республика Вьетнам*

**Аннотация:** во время войны против США женщины играли значительную роль в борьбе, особенно в мобилизации солдат. С момента создания зоны VI до подписания Парижского соглашения женщины всегда были ведущей силой в политической борьбе и мобилизации солдат. В этой статье описываются военные действия женщин в зоне 6 во время войны против США (1954 - 1975). В этой области женщины вносят значительный вклад в окончательную победу в войне против США в этом районе.

**Ключевые слова:** солдаты, мобилизация солдат, женская борьба.

After signing the Geneva Agreement, the American imperialists waged war to invade Vietnam. The movements of fighting against the US – Diệm (Ngô Đình Diệm is the President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) and demanding the implementation of the Geneva Agreement continued to take place but mainly political struggle. By 1960, the great victory and climax of the Dong Khoi Movement had undermined the strategy called "unilateral war" of the US and liberated a large rural area. Following the Dong Khoi movement, the revolutionary movement were developed in the South Central and the South Central Highlands. From reality on the battlefield, in May 1961, the Politburo decided to divide the battlefield in the South Central into two Zones were Zone 5 and Zone 6. Zone 6 included Provinces such as Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, Dac Lac, Tuyen Duc, Lam Dong under the Central Office for South Vietnam. Since being established, Zone 6 has led the military service. Women's activities in the military region had contributed significantly to the success of the military service.

The Vietnam Women's Union (1999) had researched on women's struggles in the South Central and the Central Highlands, which is *Women of South Central Vietnam in the struggle for national salvation (1930 - 1975)* (Da Nang Publishing House). This work showed the struggle activities of women in South Central during the two resistance wars. Women's military service in military region 6 was faintly reviewed. Similarly, the Women's Union of Lam Dong Province (2000) had the work named *History of the women's movement in Lam Dong (1930 - 2000)*, Lam Dong. This work only focused on the political struggle movement and the women's armed companies in Lam Dong Province. Military service was rarely mentioned. Besides, there was the Master Thesis of Le Dieu Ha (2012), namely *Women's Contributions in Ninh Thuan in the war against America (1954 - 1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. This thesis mentioned the contributions of women in Ninh Thuan in many fields, in which military service was shown according to typical struggles. Besides, the Steering Committee had compiled the historic events of Zone VI in the war against the US for national salvation (2002) named *Zone VI in the war against the US for national salvation from 1954 to 1975*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi. This work only provided a general overview of the military service and didn't mention the women's struggles.

In summary, the above works had mentioned the military service of women in Zone 6. However, the mention was still sporadic and fuzzy and had not yet become a thorough system.

Inheriting the above works, this article is going to synthesize the military service of women in Zone 6 during the war against the US (1954 - 1975) to clarify this struggle activity. To do this, the article uses the historical

method and logical method based on the study of the above documents and archives of Zone 6 that refers to the direction of the Party Committee of Zone 6 for military work and women's activities.

### **1. The women of Zone 6 mobilized soldiers and coordinate to destroy the strategic hamlet**

The great victory of the Dong Khoi Movement (1960) helped us master many rural areas. Following that victory, on March 8, 1961, the People's Liberation Armed Forces of South Việt Nam was also founded. After its establishment, the People's Liberation Armed Forces of South Việt Nam and the military service sector attempted to build groups of "permanent military service" that was to gather cadres specialized in carrying out agitation and propaganda among enemy troops. Since then, "groups of mobile military service" appeared. They were women who always followed the enemy's main or local units to operate. The women went to the military schools and claimed to be mothers and wives of the soldiers to find out who the families were and made plans with their families for calling them to defect. Those women pulled their husbands, children, and younger brothers to defect and explain the truth to them. They threatened to make the enemy take down their guns and leave the garrisons. More specifically, they enlightened the revolutionary ideal for soldiers to build organizations in the enemy's military area.

With the change of the battlefield, Party Committee of Zone 6 held the Open Conference (February 1962) and determined the task of the military work which was "*Conducting revolutionary campaign among soldiers of the enemy, disintegrating the organization from more or less, partially limiting the oppressive ability and fighting power of the enemy. Supporting the political movement of the masses and serving our warfare. At the same time, mobilizing soldiers and their families to fight against the enemy's policies, going forward with the whole people to overthrow the US – Diệm (Ngô Đình Diệm is the President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam)*" [2, p. 53-54].

Implementing the Resolution of Zone 6, in many places, women rebelled to fight and destroy strategic hamlets. In Ninh Thuan Province, women coordinated with the armed forces to attack and destroy the enemy's Tu Tam military base in Huu Duc and Thuan Nam strategic hamlet. In Binh Thuan, on the night of August 4, 1962, women in Le Hong Phong and Ham Tan area, together with the people rebelled to destroy strategic hamlets, and had owned the villages namely Tam Tan, Go Dinh, Tan Hiep. They also encouraged other women to organize associations and encouraged 100 young men and women to escape. In Dak Lak, women and people rebelled to hunt for wicked thugs, supplied for the army and built the area they had owned.

With the attack on the enemy under 3 attacking elements, the Women's Union in localities promoted the movement to mobilize the enemy's soldiers to desert and work as internal affairs for our army. A remarkable feature was that the mobilization of soldiers' families to fight for their husbands and children had been paid attention to by the Women's Union at all levels. In particular, after the victories of our army and people, the Association at all levels mobilized the families of the Sai Gon troops to pull up the garrisons and towns, finding the corpses of the soldiers and fighting for their husbands and children. By 1964, the military service was formed and closely directed from the military region and provinces to communes and towns. Many female cadres were involved, especially at small-scale enterprise-level. The continuous fighting activities caused the number of soldiers to desert increasingly. Typically in Quang Duc, from September to November 1964, there were 8 commandos and popular-forces platoons disintegrating. In Hoai Duc District (Binh Thuan), in November 1964, 4 popular-forces platoons and 1 republican platoon disintegrated, bringing back 17 guns. Typically, Ms. Tran Thi Tinh in Hoa Thang Commune (Binh Thuan Province) had great merit in bringing the popular-forces platoon No. 32 back to the revolution [1, p. 317].

Besides the emergence of the Dong Khoi Movement, another special cohort also appeared, which was called the "Long-Haired Army". "Long-Haired Army" had a great advantage when performing military work because they had expressed the feelings of mothers and wives. They took their husbands, children, and brothers out of death and not being collateral damage for invaders and traitors. The "Long-Haired Army" contributed to undermining the strategies of the "special war" of the United States and the victories of Zone 6.

### **2. Women of Zone 6 participated in the military work in the period of 1965 – 1975**

Failure in the dry season in 1965 – 1966 made US President Johnson decided to promote war. In Zone 6, the US - Sai Gon troops gathered nearly 100% of their forces to raid the countryside and the base and suppressed each area of the Provinces in the Zone. Therefore, the Party Committee of Zone 6 held the 5th Open Conference (in May 1966) to assess the situation and set out the tasks in the coming time. Regarding the motto of operation, the Conference determined that "*taking military victory to support the development of political struggles, military service...; closely combining the activities of the three forces, between the military struggle and the political struggle, between the warfare and the popular-forces, the military service to destroy and disintegrate many of the enemy's forces and rear; destroying hamlets for people to expand the region*" [3, p. 32].

Following the direction of the Party Committee of Zone 6, the women in the Zone had done well in propaganda and education among the people, especially Cham and Nung women as well as Christian migrant women. Women directly fought against the enemy and mobilized families whose children were of age to enlist or were forced to enlist, to fight against the arrest of soldiers and demand to return their husbands, children, and brothers back. This action created a large movement. Because the enemy made a series of raids to force the

young to enlist in the army, women called on the families to gather on the road to block the enemy forces, stop the vehicles and prevent them from taking the youth away. The highlighted case was that 20 youths in Phuoc Khanh were arrested to move to Phan Rang. Women in Phuoc Khanh went to Phan Rang and then to the governor's palace to request for their children's release. This incident was attended by a large number of women and disabled soldiers in Phan Rang, turning into a protest against the arrest of soldiers that disturbed the whole town.

After that ferment, the military work had gained the consent of many enemy soldiers in the struggles of the people. Some people were disgusted with war, expressing anti-American spirit. The status of changing attitudes and defection was also growing.

In 1973, all forces in the Zone developed activities such as keeping the area, resisting, destroying, preventing, or restricting the enemy from invading our area and defaced their plans for railroad restoration [5]. Along with armed action, the movement to fight for the rights of people, democracy in association with the demand for legal implementation of the Paris Agreement continued to develop. On that basis, one of the forms of activity was organizing groups to visit their husbands and children and appeal to their husbands and children to go home [4].

When the enemy did not agree to implement the Paris Agreement, the organizations of small-scale-enterprise level Women's Union tried to propagate and educate thousands of turns of the masses, including hundreds of popular-forces and defectors..., disturbing the enemy's spirit and ideology. The women actively propagated and explained the Paris Agreement to the puppet soldiers and employees, urging them to respect the Agreement with the slogan that was "demanding peace, demanding a ceasefire, demanding freedom and democracy, improving living, demanding freedom of movement between regions, demanding to come back the old hometown to do business" [1, p. 427]. Besides, women in Dak Lak and Lam Dong Province also organized "National Harmony New Year" and "New Year to celebrate peace", which attracted thousands of officers, civil servants, police, and soldiers. Taking advantage of that opportunity, we propagandized and explained the Paris Agreement.

In coordination with the struggle for implementing the Paris Agreement, women and people bravely fought against grip in communes and hamlets under many forms such as isolating, criticizing, and controlling. At the same time, they also served the working teams and guerrilla teams to destroy wicked thugs and the grip, ... making the enemy's forces be confused and escape. The people started to do business and fight against soldiers and rice robbery. This movement was sometimes very drastic. In the places the enemy had just gathered people, women fought for the right to life, against the arrest of soldiers, and demanded freedom of movement and business. Until October 1974, many areas were still not stable for living and production. Particularly, in Ezepic (Phan Thiet), most people had moved to other places.

At the end of 1974, the enemy fell into a status of complete crisis and had to return to the defensive position. The position and force between us and the enemy changed completely. The premise for the liberation of the South had come. In October 1974, based on the new strategic situation and opportunities, the Politburo decided to completely liberate the South in two years from 1975 to 1976. If the opportunity came at the end of 1975, the South would be completely liberated in 1975.

In early 1975, in coordination with the battlefields of the Central Highlands and the Southeast, the Standing Committee and Party Committee of Zone 6 decided to liberate two districts which were Hoai Duc and Tanh Linh, then coordinated with the main regional army to liberate former Lam Dong Province ( Former Lam Dong province included Dong Nai Thuong, Bao Loc, and Di Linh). From March 16 to March 22, 1975, after the liberation of two districts which were Hoai Duc and Tanh Linh, tens of thousands of women and people around the Town and District rebelled to destroy strategic hamlets such as Sung Nhon, Nghi Duc, Vo Xu... and took the ownership. Then, within a week (from March 27 to April 3, 1975), the attack and uprising of Lam Dong Province and Tuyen Duc Province ended successfully. From the beginning of April to April 23, 1975, we liberated the remaining provinces and completely liberated Zone 6. From then, the road to Sai Gon was widened from the east and northeast of the main legions in the Ho Chi Minh campaign. In the end, the campaign for the liberation of the South and reunification of the whole country was completely successful.

### **3. Conclusion**

During the war against the US to save the country of Zone 6, women were an enthusiastic force and always took the lead in political struggle and military work. Their contributions played an important role in the victory of the war against the US of the area.

Political struggle and military work in the war against the US in the South had become a means and a special element of fighting undertaken by the "Long-Haired Army". It could be said that from the time Zone 6 was established to the Paris Agreement, women had always been the force who paid for the broken crockery and directly fight, contributing to the defeat of the raiding and pacification of the enemy. The arms of mothers and sisters blocked the chain of the vehicle, covered the barrel of a gun, repelled mop-up campaign, prevented the enemy from capturing soldiers, demanded their children's release, demanded democracy, and broke strategic hamlets, rocking the base and disintegrating the enemy's ranks.

We are confident that intelligence, courage, self-reliance will be a good premise for women to steadily contribute to accelerating the industrialization and modernization of the country.

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