

Deepe

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March 4, 1966

SAIGON---"Have spent four days in tunnel," Viet Cong fighter Tran Bang wrote in his diary. "About 8,000 to 9,000 American soldiers were in for a sweep-operation. The attack was fierce..."

Shortly after two o'clock in the hot afternoon, Tran Bang finished the entry in his diary---it was to be his last entry---giving an intimate portrait of a Viet Cong soldiers' view of a battle with American troops. The date was January 11, three days after thousands of American, Australian and New Zealand troops launched Operation Crimp in the famed Iron Triangle northwest of Saigon.

At the end of the operation the allied troops destroyed an intricate eight-mile-long tunnel complex headquartering the Viet Cong's Saigon-Gia Dinh Capital Military Zone Command, killing 128 Viet Cong, capturing more than 1500 prisoners, suspects and refugees, 90 weapons---and two truckloads of precious documents, including the diary of Tran Bang.

(More)

His diary continued:

"The attack was fierce, in the last few days. A number of underground tunnels collapsed. Some (of our men) were caught in them and have not been able to get out yet. It is not known what have become of sisters BA, BAY, HONG HANH and TAN HO in these tunnels. In their attempt to provide security for the agency, TAN and UT were killed. Their bodies, left unattended and deteriorated, have not been buried yet. In the afternoon, one of our village unit members trying to stay close to the enemy for reconnaissance was killed and his body has not been recovered.

Fifteen minutes ago, enemy jets dropped bombs: houses collapsed and trees fell. I was talking when a rocket exploded 2 meters away and bombs poured down like a torrent.

We should fight them, we should annihilate them, you (US soldiers) will have no way out...

It is always dark before sunrise. After cold days, warm days will come...

The most tiresome moment is when one moves up a hill. One must rise up disregarding death and hardships, determined to defeat the American aggressors.

Oh! What hard days, one has to stay in tunnel, eat cold rice with salt, drink unboiled water! However, one is free and feels at ease.

1445 hours

Officials presume Tran Bang was killed in action.