

# The Suicides on April 30, 1975

## 1. Dang Si Vinh

He moved in our neighborhood sometime in early 1974. His family - wife and seven children - soon earned sympathy from people along the paved alley of a Saigon suburb where most inhabitants were in lower middle class. His eldest son was about thirty years old and a first lieutenant in the Army Medical branch after graduated pharmacist from the Medical School. The youngest was a 15-year-old pretty girl.

It would have been a happy family if Saigon had not fallen to the hands of the Communist North Vietnam army. That was what people in the neighborhood said about the middle-aged RVN Army Major Dang Si Vinh, who was holding a job in the National Police Headquarters in Saigon.

At about 2:00 PM on April 30, 1975, almost two hours after RVN President Duong Van Minh surrendered to the Communists, people near by heard several pistol reports from his home. After hesitating for safety, his neighbors got into his home to find Major Vinh, his wife and his seven children lying each on a single mattress, all dead, each by one .45 caliber bullet that gushed pools of blood from the horrible holes at their temples.

On a long dining table, decent meals had been served and eaten as if in an usual and peaceful dinner. There were nine small glasses, all had traces of a pink powder left at their bottoms. Apparently, Maj. Vinh and his relatives had taken the drug - probably sleeping pills - before Vinh gave each a finishing stroke with his .45 pistol.

In an open small safe he left some hundreds of thousands South Vietnam piaster, rated about 500 dollars at the time, an indication of his poor circumstances as an army major. On the note along with the money, Vinh wrote:

*"Dear neighbors,"*

*"Forgive us. Because our family would not live under the Communist regime, we have to end our lives this way that might be bothering you. Please inform my only sibling, a sister named ... at... and use this money to help her bury us anywhere. "*

*"Thank you,"*

*"Dang Si Vinh."*

The fall of Saigon drove many people into not only suicide but serious mental disorder as well. Ten years later, some physicians said that at least one thousand people around the Saigon area suffered incurable insanity on that day of the Black April.

Maj. Vinh was one among many others who committed suicide on and after April 30, 1975. Those who committed suicide were mostly officers, politicians, government officials, and young NCOs were estimated at several hundreds. But only some famous cases were fully recorded.

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## 2. Le Van Hung (1933-1975)

Brigadier General, deputy commander of the IV Corps/Military Region 4 at Can Tho. Hung was born in Gia Dinh province near Saigon.

In 1954, he was drafted and received training in the Thu Duc Reserve Officers School, Class 5, graduated second-lieutenant in January 1955. In January 1959, First Lieutenant Hung was the 32nd Infantry Regiment S-2 when the Viet Cong conducted a surprise attack at the regiment base camp in Trang Sup, Tay Ninh province, and took away a large number of weapons. As the duty officer of the regiment headquarters, he bravely commanded the reconnaissance platoon, the only soldiers present in the barracks, to resist and to protect the other parts of the headquarters and other materials and equipment from being destroyed or lost.

In 1961 he was appointed Chief of Police Department of Vinh Binh province, and later a battalion commander when he was a captain in 1964. In 1967, he became the commander, 31st Infantry Regiment. Then he was assigned province chief of Phong Dinh (Can Tho). June 1971, Hung was given the command of the 5th Infantry Division and promoted brigadier general in 1 March 1972. He proved to be a talented and brave infantry commander in the bloody battle of An Loc during the Summer 1972 Campaign. He held firmly the city of An Loc under the enemy fierce attacks that lasted 2 months.

Until his death, Hung had successively been assistant commander, III Corps/Military Region 3; commander, 21st Infantry Division; and deputy commander, IV Corps/Military Region 4.

At 8:30 PM, 30 April 1975, his troops still kept the city of Can Tho under control. A delegation of the city people came to see him and convinced him - as he was the deputy commander - that his ARVN forces should not fight to death as they certainly would, because the people were sure that the Communists would spare nobody in Can Tho in order to win. They would not hesitate to shell Can Tho into rubble. General Le Van Hung and the commander, General Nguyen Khoa Nam, dropped their intention to fight to the last bullet. Hung then said farewell to his men, his wife and children before he killed himself by a .45 pistol. It was 8:45 PM, 30 April 1975.

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## 3. Le Nguyen Vy (1933-1975)



Brigadier General, commander, 5th Infantry Division at Lai Khe. General Vy was born in Son Tay province, North Vietnam. He graduated from the officers candidate course in the Regional Military School, Military Region II at Phu Bai near Hue, Class 1951.

After receiving the order to surrender, General Vy committed suicide by a pistol at 11:00 AM, 30 April 1975 at the division headquarters in Lai Khe.

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## 4. Nguyen Khoa Nam (1927-1975)

Major General, commander IV Corps and Military Region 4. General Nam was born in Quang Nam province. He was drafted and graduated from Thu Duc Reserve Officers School, Class 3 in 1953..

General Nam was highly respected by his subordinates, his equals, even his superiors, as well as the people in his region ever since he commanded the 7th Infantry Division. His spirit of discipline made him a good example to his soldiers.

At 11:30 PM, 30 April 1975, General Nam killed himself after saying farewell to his staff and talking by telephone with General Le Van Hung, who had ended his life earlier.

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## 5. Tran Van Hai (1925-1975)

Brigadier General, commander, 7th Infantry Division at Dong Tam, near My Tho.



General Hai was born in Phong Dinh province (Can Tho). He graduated from the Dalat Military Academy, Class 7, 1951. Hai was renowned of being incorruptible, outspoken and brave. In 1968, he was commanding the Ranger Branch Command, directly supervising the Ranger's raid to clear the enemy force that infiltrated into the business quarter of Cho Lon area. He was then assigned National Police Chief. In 1970 he was commander, Special Tactical Area 44... before commanding the 7th Division.

He won the adoration of everyone who once worked with him, as he was renowned of being incorruptible. At midnight, 30 April 1975, he committed suicide at the Division Headquarters, Dong Tam Army Base.

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## 6. Pham Van Phu (1928-1975)

Commander, II Corps/Military Region 2. General Phu was born in Ha Dong, North Vietnam. He graduated the Dalat Military Academy, Class 8. In 1954, Phu was a company officer in the 5th Parachutist Battalion of the Army of the State of Vietnam, fighting beside the French in Dien Bien Phu.

In the RVN Army, Phu had been commander of the RVN Special Force, the 2nd Infantry Division, Quang Trung Training Center, before taking the command of the II Corps/Military Region II in Pleiku. His troops suffered heavy losses on the way of withdrawal to the coastal areas in April 1975.

General Phu committed suicide on 30 April 1975 in Saigon.

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## 6. Colonel Ho Ngoc Can (1940-1975)

He was one who elected to commit suicide by fighting to death.

Ho Ngoc Can was admitted in the RVN Junior Military Academy when he was 14 years old. After graduation, he served 4 years as an instructor sergeant in the same academy. In 1961, he attended the Officer Candidates Course at the Dong De NCO Academy and was the distinguished graduate of the course in 1962.



After commissioned, Can served the Ranger Corps as a platoon leader. He was promoted to captain in 1965, to major in 1968, to lieutenant colonel in 1971, and to full colonel in 1974. He was successfully commanding the 1/33 Battalion (21st Infantry Division), the 15th Regiment (9th Inf. Div.). In 1974, Can was appointed province chief of Chuong Thien Province, Vietnam deep south area.

On April 30, 1975, he refused to surrender to the enemy. Along with his troops, Can was fighting with all his might, holding the provincial headquarters until 11:00 PM on May 1, when his forces were out of ammunition. In the last minutes, he ordered the soldiers to leave the headquarters for safety while he and a faithful Popular Force militiaman covered them with a machine gun.

He fell into the hands of the Communist force after he failed an attempt to kill himself. He told the enemy that he wouldn't surrender, and asked them to let him salute the RVN colors with his uniform on before the execution.

Can was publicly executed by the Communist firing squad after a quick summary trial at a Communist cheaply staged court martial.

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