



Forsaken Warriors: The Story of an American Advisor who Fought with the South Vietnamese Rangers and Airborne

Robert L. Tonsetic

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The book is a personal memoir of the author's service as a US Army advisor during the end-stages of America's involvement in Vietnam. During the period 1970-71, the US was beginning to draw down its combat forces, and the new watchword was Vietnamization. It was the period when the will of the US to prosecute the war had slipped, and transferring responsibility to the South Vietnamese was the only remaining hope for victory.

The author served as a US Army advisor to South Vietnamese Ranger and Airborne units during this critical period. The units that the author advised spearheaded several campaigns in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, as the US combat units withdrew. Often outnumbered and outgunned, the elite ranger and airborne units fought Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units in some of the most difficult terrain in Southeast Asia, ranging from the legendary U Minh forest and Mo So mountains in the Mekong Delta, to the rugged hills of southern Laos.

The role of the small US advisory teams is fully explained in the narrative. With little support from higher headquarters, these teams accompanied the Vietnamese units on highly dangerous combat operations over which they had no command or control authority. When US advisors were restricted from accompanying South Vietnamese forces on cross-border operations in Cambodia and especially Laos, the South Vietnamese forces were badly mauled, raising concerns about their readiness and training, and their ability to operate without their US advisors. As a result, a major effort was placed on training these forces while the clock continued to run on the US withdrawal.

Having served with a US infantry battalion during the peak years of the US involvement in Vietnam, Robert Tonsetic-the acclaimed author of *Days of Valor*-is able to view the war through two different prisms and offer criticisms and an awareness of why the South Vietnamese armed forces were ultimately defeated.

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