

# *ABOUT US*



During the French Indochina War, there were many different airborne units in the French-Vietnamese Army, such as French / European / Vietnamese Indochinese Paratroop Companies, Colonial Paracommando Battalions, and Foreign Legion Paratroopers. At the time, large scale troop carrying helicopters had not yet been introduced, so airborne assaults were just about the only way to transport combat troops to remote areas in a time of crisis. During this time, the colonial paratroopers conducted 46 combat parachute jumps, 8 of them into Dien Bien Phu!

When the Indochina War ended, the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th and 7th VN ABN Infantry BNs and their support units were designated the Republic of Vietnam Airborne Group. After the war, all the other various airborne units were disbanded. In 1961 this Airborne Group was re-designated the Airborne Brigade. The Brigade was tripled in size to Divisional status in 1965; with the addition of the 2nd, 8th, 9th and 11th ABN Infantry BNs as well as the 1st and 2nd ABN Artillery BNs and additional support groups. They were organized into a total of three infantry parachute brigades. Near the end of this “Second” or “American” Indochina War, a fourth parachute infantry brigade was being activated.

The Vietnamese paratroopers were one of the elite units of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam and were their most highly decorated military unit. Along with the Vietnamese Marines, they constituted the Vietnamese Strategic Alert Force or “National Reserve” of the RVN. Primarily, they were deployed to any “hot spot” in any of the 4 Corps of RVN when local units and the “Corps Reserve” units could not contain the enemy. They were inserted into areas where the enemy was and they engaged in nearly continuous combat from 1951 until 1975. Because of the introduction of troop carrying helicopters, the Vietnamese paratrooper conducted just 10 battalion/brigade sized combat jumps during the “Second” Indochina War, Whether they were under French, American or RVN tutelage, they did not fight for a government nor for a flag, but they lived, fought, and died for the honor of the Airborne and their fellow paratroopers.

From 1955 to 1973, a total of only a little over 1,200 American Army paratroopers were assigned to the VN ABN as advisors. Their unit was Military Assistance Command Vietnam, Advisory Team 162 and they were comprised of about half and half officers and non-commissioned officers. For air support, a total of only a little over 165 US Air Force personnel were also assigned to MACV Team 162.

Initially, the advisors were just a small group providing technical and training missions, rather than engaging in tactical operations. Not until 1961 did the Military Assistance Advisory Group Vietnam change the course of the war by assigning American advisors to Vietnamese combat battalions. In 1962 the American Advisors were awarded the privilege of wearing the camouflage fatigues and the coveted Red Berets of the VN ABN. Thus, the Army Advisors adopted the call sign "Red Hat" and the Air Force Advisors adopted the call sign "Red Marker."

As the war progressed, the number of advisors assigned to Team 162 increased. At their peak, the Army contingent was about 100 troopers; with two officers and two NCOs assigned to each infantry battalion; and additional advisors assigned to support and command groups at each brigade and at staff groups at the division level.

At their peak, the Air Force contingent was 36 airmen, 16 officers and 20 enlisted personnel were organized into Tactical Air Control Parties (TACP). Each TACP was typically comprised of 2 or 3 pilots and 3 or 4 enlisted; which were a Radio Operator, a Maintenance and Driver (ROMAD) with his MRC 108 Radio Jeep and generator and, in good times, an O-1 crew chief.

Advisors in Vietnam had a very different role than that of those assigned to American units. Because only small groups of advisors were assigned to any VN ABN unit, they had to have a great amount of self-motivation to live and fight alongside a foreign Army that had a radically different language and culture.

During this time, "All gave some and some gave all." There are no reliable records of the thousands and thousands of Vietnamese paratroopers who were killed or wounded during the "French" Indochina War nor either the "American" Second Indochina War. However it is estimated that over 20,000 Viet paratroopers were killed in action during the "American" Second Indochina War. Likewise, there is no reliable record of how many advisors were wounded while assigned to Team 162, but a total of 24 Red Hats and 4 Red Markers were killed in action; the most of any advisory unit.