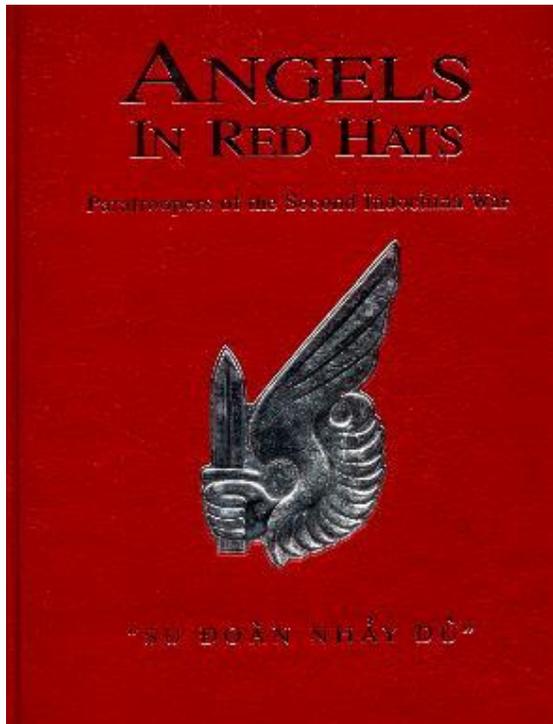
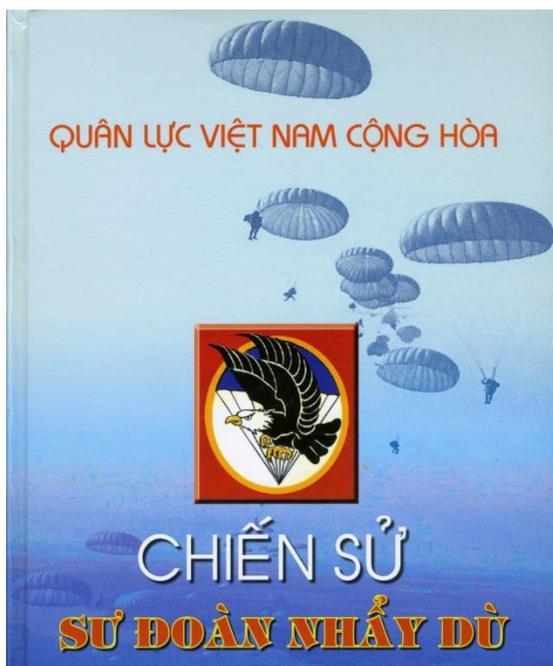


# A Review of Vietnamese Airborne Books



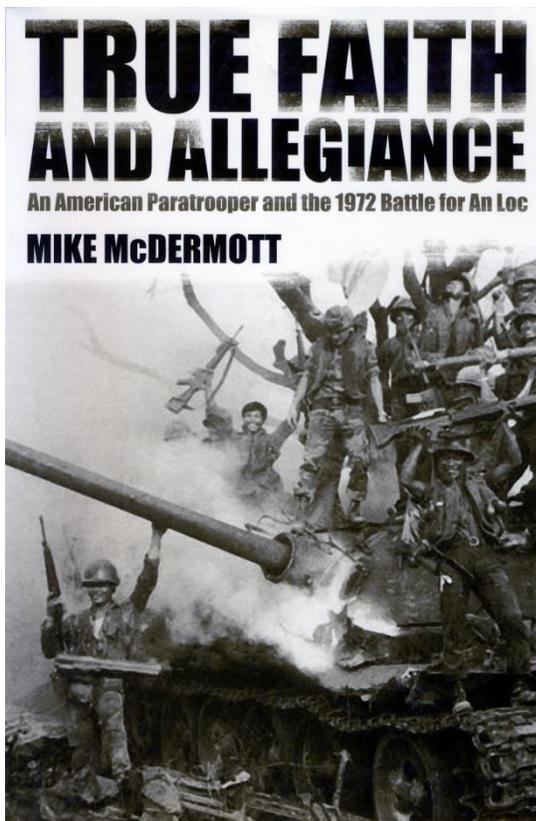
**By CSM(R) Mike Martin** A must read book for any Airborne soldier, historian, collector or anyone interested in elite units and Vietnam. The book captures the unique esprit-de-corps of the Vietnamese Paratroopers and their U.S. Airborne Advisors in words and photographs. The Red Berets were the backbone of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam. The book contains historical highlights, medals, awards, citations combat jumps, action photographs, personal stories, and 50th anniversary references.



A history of the Vietnamese paratroopers **written by the Vietnamese Paratroopers.** This 631 page book is in Vietnamese, but pages 380 -447 are in English



**By Red Hat Garry Willis** From 1962 until early 1973, a handful of USAF officers and airmen directed close air support for the Vietnamese Airborne and its American advisors in MACV Advisory Team 162. This Red Marker detachment began as a single Air Liaison Officer and grew into a combat unit of 36 personnel with a dozen aircraft before shrinking to a single officer as the United States withdrew from combat. Over the decade of its existence, less than 175 men served in the unit. Five of them died in combat. This book contains the history of these forward air controllers from the beginning to the end, based on contributions from 76 men who were there.

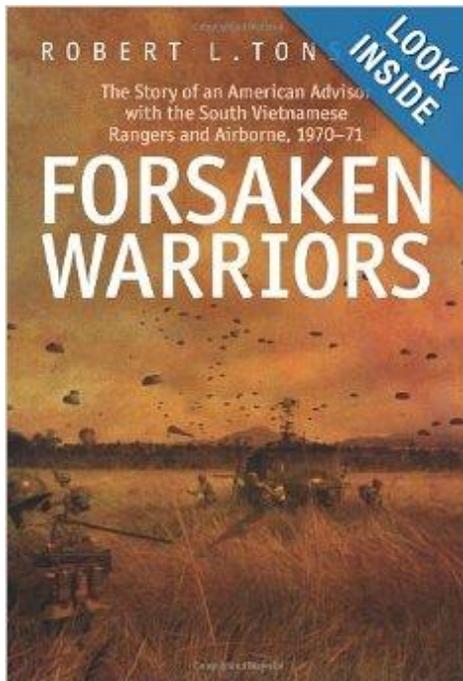


**By Red Hat Mike McDermott** **TRUE FAITH AND ALLEGIANCE** is an intimate and compelling account of the brutal infantry warfare, as well a critique of the mishandling of America's departure from Indochina. An unintended consequence of Washington's stampede to get out of Indochina was an upsurge in combat on a scale not seen before in Vietnam, peaking with the Easter Offensive of 1972.

The battle for An Loc, a key component in the North Vietnamese attempt to overwhelm the South, swept Mike McDermott, then the senior advisor to the 5<sup>th</sup> Vietnamese Airborne Battalion, into some of the most horrific close-quarters fighting of the war. His in-the-trenches account is augmented by detailed descriptions of a user's perspective on parachute resupply,

tactical airpower and B-52 strikes that allowed the An Loc garrison to survive.

Mike was awarded his second Distinguished Service Cross for his exceptionally valorous actions during this horrific battle at An Loc. He was awarded his first Distinguished Service Cross while a 1LT assigned to the 101<sup>st</sup> ABN DIV in 1967.



**By Red Hat Robert Tonsetic** This 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. 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.

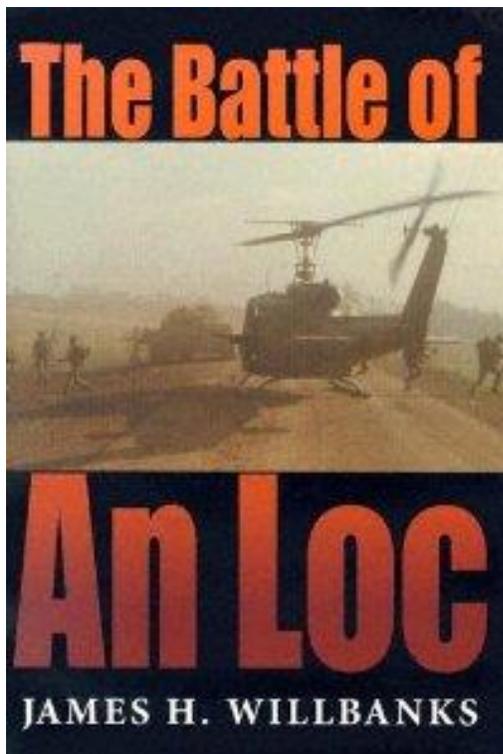
The role of the small US advisory teams is fully explained in the narrative. With little support from higher headquarters, these teams accompanied the Vietnamese units on highly dangerous combat operations over which they had no command or control authority. When US advisors were restricted from accompanying 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.

Tonsetic was a Senior Advisor for a Ranger Battalion from September 1970 until he arranged a transfer to the Vietnamese Airborne on 29 MAY 71. Vietnamization reduced battalion level advisory teams to just the Vietnamese Airborne, the Marines and newly fielded ARVN infantry units. He was the 2nd ABN BN Senior Advisor from 29 MAY - 29 AUG 71 and his counterpart was Thieu Ta Manh. Manh was the 2nd BN XO and assumed command during Lam Son 719 when the commander broke under fire and rode a dust off helicopter to safety. Manh led a breakout of his troops and they fought their way back to Vietnam.

Tonsetic reported to LTC Tom Ulvenes (now deceased) and was first escorted around the Team area by CPT Ed Donaldson. His 2nd BN team included SFC Garrison (not on our Red Hat list), SSG Joe Pilon, SSG Bill Ball. Tonsetic was made Assistant Senior Advisor when by MAJ Michael Davison was assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> BN.

About 15 pages of the book is a very good summary of Operation Lam Son 719 which occurred four months before he joined Team 162. He used the official reports and interviews with COL Vaught and others as sources for that narrative.



**By James Willbanks** The North Vietnamese held most of Binh Long province from Chon Thanh north to the Cambodian border with the exception of the town of An Loc. It was clear that An Loc would be the scene of the next major North Vietnamese effort. Not only were the lives of the South Vietnamese soldiers and their American advisers on the line, but so too was the prestige of the South Vietnamese government. The loss of a province so close to Saigon would be a disastrous loss of face for President Thieu and his administration. From the American perspective, the battle would be the supreme test of Vietnamization and President Nixon's policies in Vietnam. More than that, however, was the fact that very little stood between the North Vietnamese and Saigon except the forces at An Loc.

With the knowledge born of firsthand experience, James H. Willbanks tells the story of the 60-day siege of An Loc. In 1972, late in the Vietnam War, a small

group of South Vietnamese held off three North Vietnamese divisions and helped prevent a direct attack on Saigon. The battle can be considered one of the major events during the gradual American exit from Vietnam. An advisor to the South Vietnamese during the battle, Willbanks places the battle in the context of the shifting role of the American forces and a policy decision to shift more of the burden of fighting the war onto the Vietnamese troops. He presents an overview of the 1972 North Vietnamese Easter Offensive, a plan to press forward the attack on U.S. and ARVN positions throughout the country, including Binh Long province and Saigon. The North Vietnamese hoped to strike a decisive blow at a time when most American troops were being withdrawn. The heart of Willbanks's account concentrates on the fighting in Binh Long province, Saigon, and the siege of An Loc. It concludes with a discussion of the Paris peace talks, the significance of the fighting at An Loc, and the eventual fall of South Vietnam.