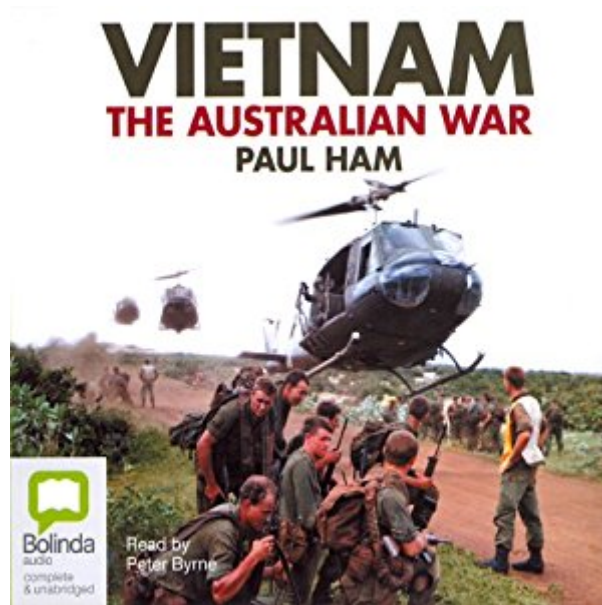


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Vietnam: The Australian War



Synopsis

The definitive account of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, by best-selling author of Kokoda. Seen as the last 'hot' frontline of the Cold War, the 10 year struggle in the rice paddies and jungles of South Vietnam unleashed the most devastating firepower on the Vietnamese nation and visited terrible harm on civilians and soldiers. Yet the Australian forces applied tactics that were very different from those of the Americans. Guided by their commanders' experience of jungle combat, Australian troops operated with stealth, deception and restraint in pursuing a 'better war'. Drawing on hundreds of accounts by soldiers, politicians, aid workers, entertainers and the Vietnamese people, Paul Ham reconstructs for the first time the full history of our longest military campaign. From the commitment to engage, through the fight over conscription and the rise of the anti-war movement, to the tactics and horror of the battlefield, Ham exhumes the truth about this politicians' war - which sealed the fate of 50,000 Australian servicemen and women. More than 500 soldiers were killed and thousands wounded. Those who made it home returned to a hostile and ignorant country and a reception that scarred them forever. This is their story.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 31 hours and 16 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Bolinda Publishing Pty Ltd

Audible.com Release Date: December 15, 2008

Language: English

ASIN: B001O15JJQ

Best Sellers Rank: #16 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Australia & Oceania #179

in Books > History > Australia & Oceania > Australia & New Zealand #682 in Books > History > Military > United States > Vietnam War

Customer Reviews

Vietnam: The Australian War. A thoughtful friend gave me this book for Christmas (2007) and for the two days of hard reading I was transported back through 40 years to the red earth, the sticky humidity and green foliage of South Vietnam. The sixties and seventies were a time of massive societal upheaval in Australia, as they were in America. Vietnam became the catalyst that saw the austere, gerontocracies that had dominated society since the Great Depression cast aside by the

more hedonistic Baby Boomers, who had developed a different view of life. Having lived through this era, and having served in Vietnam as a National Serviceman (conscripted 1967-1968) it was often difficult for me to see the inter-relatedness of the changes and events. Paul Ham has done an excellent job in putting together most of the pieces of the jigsaw that describe Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War in this divisive and highly emotive period of Australia's modernisation. The difficulty for any author with such a complex topic is the question of what to use, and what to leave out. And then, where to insert parts of the story that don't actually fit the chronological recount. Using a scaffold employed in documentary film, Ham tells the main story and inserts the stand-alone pieces that help break up the linear presentation. The strongest chapters in the book are those that relate to the battle at Long Tan. The author has described for the first time the use of SIGINT and the role of 547 Signal Troop in the lead-up to the battle. Of real interest was the lack of decisiveness of the upper echelons of the Task Force to extract D/6RAR from its life threatening situation. Without the astute leadership of Harry Smith and the brilliant F.O.

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