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101st Airborne in Vietnam: The Screaming Eagles (Spearhead)

Simon Dunstan, N. Cornish, Mike Sharpe

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The 'Spearhead' series is designed to look at the cutting edge of war, dealing with units capable of operating completely independently in the forefront of battle. Each volume in the series examines the chosen unit's origins and history, its organisation and order of battle, its battle history theatre by theatre, its insignia and its markings. Also covered are biographies of the most important commanders of each unit. Each title ends with an assessment of unit effectiveness - as seen by the unit itself, by its opponents and the light of more recent historical research. The books also include a detailed reference section with a critical bibliography, a listing of relevant museums and web sites, information about re-enactment groups and memorials. After World War 2 the 101st Airborne Division remained in Germany serving occupation duty until November 1945 when it was deactivated and shipped home. Between 1945 and 1956, the 101st was activated and deactivated three times as a training unit at Camp Breckinridge, KY and Fort Jackson, SC. It was responsible for training the 11th Airborne Division which served in Korea. In March 1956 the 101st transferred to Fort Campbell, KY where it remained in active service but at reduced manpower levels until involvement in Southeast Asia saw a build up of the 101st, preparatory to its July 1965 insertion into combat. Blooded in the Song Con Valley, the 1st Brigade of the 'Screaming Eagles' saw a great deal of action. In early 1967, it acted as a rapid reaction force, reinforcing American and South Vietnamese forces when necessary, and becoming expert in rapid helicopter assaults. The 2nd and 3rd Brigades of the 101st arrived in December 1967 in time to take part in the defense against the Tet Offensive. When Tet began, Hue was defended by South Vietnamese Army units who were quickly driven from the city. The 101st and the 1st Cavalry were sent in to recapture the city. The battle for Hue raged for three weeks and was the only extended urban fighting during the war. In some cases, the soldiers of the 101st fought in hand to hand combat. One platoon from 2nd Brigade was airlifted into Saigon and fought a pitched battle on the roof of the American Embassy after it had been infiltrated by enemy forces. Following Tet the 101st saw continuous combat including fighting on Hill 937 - 'Hamburger Hill' - some of the most brutal engagements of the war. In late 1971 and early 1972 the 101st began returning home to Fort Campbell. The last Army division to leave South Vietnam, the 101st spent almost seven years in combat.

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