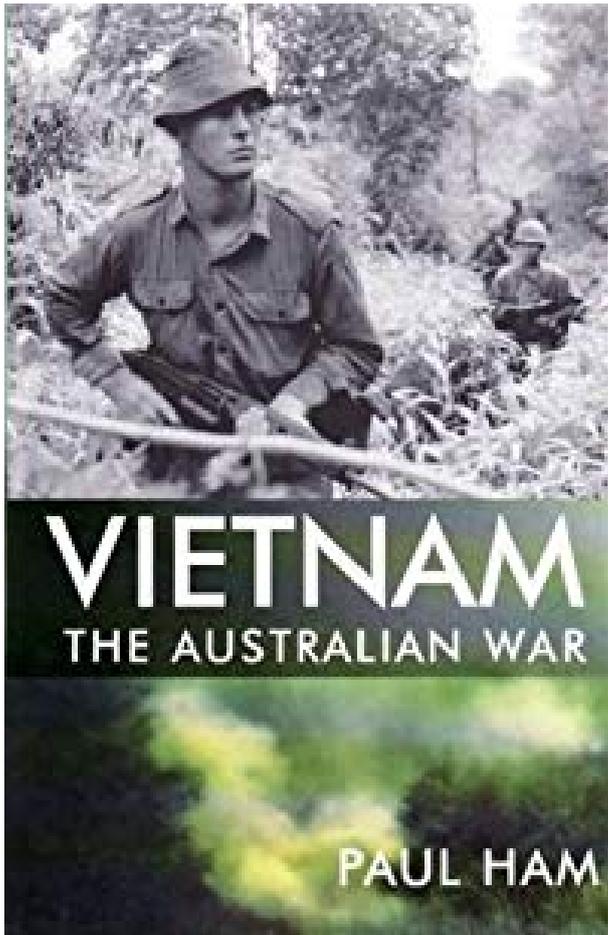


Vietnam: The Australian War



Author:	Paul Ham
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"War takes a blender to standards and values ... Men come back and spend the rest of their lives trying to find out who they are ..." - Harry Whiteside, who served with the SAS and the Royal Australian Regiment in Vietnam. "Surely God weeps," an Australian soldier wrote in despair of the conflict in Vietnam. But no God intervened to shorten the years of carnage and devastation in this most controversial of wars. Seen as the last "hot" frontline of the Cold War, the ten-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. Paul Ham's *Vietnam: The Australian War* was awarded the Australian History Prize at the 2008 NSW Premier's Awards.

The judges praised Ham for his comprehensive approach to Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War and his ability to communicate with both specialist and general readers. They said: 'A significant number of books have appeared over the past decade or so focusing on Australia's involvement in World War I, World War II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars ...

What distinguishes Paul Ham's book is the comprehensive nature of its approach, which encompasses the political and military history of Australia's involvement in Vietnam as well as the domestic social and cultural context. It is also a book that tells the human side of the war ...

It is a beautifully told story of human frailty, of the shortcomings and lack of vision of those political leaders who committed Australian troops to Vietnam; and of the narrow-minded ideologies that drove some of those who opposed the war. It is a wonderful narrative, reflecting an extraordinary knowledge of the subject, which convincingly demonstrates the important role the Vietnam War played in shaping Australia's history.'