



# Vietnam's Forgotten Army

*Andrew Wiest*

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**Vietnam's Forgotten Army** Andrew Wiest

**2009 Society for Military History Distinguished Book Award for Biography**

**Vietnam's Forgotten Army: Heroism and Betrayal in the ARVN** chronicles the lives of Pham Van Dinh and Tran Ngoc Hue, two of the brightest young stars in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). Both men fought with valor in a war that seemed to have no end, exemplifying ARVN bravery and determination that is largely forgotten or ignored in the West. However, while Hue fought until he was captured by the North Vietnamese Army and then endured thirteen years of captivity, Dinh surrendered and defected to the enemy, for whom he served as a teacher in the reeducation of his former ARVN comrades.

An understanding of how two lives that were so similar diverged so dramatically provides a lens through which to understand the ARVN and South Vietnam's complex relationship with America's government and military. The lives of Dinh and Hue reflect the ARVN's battlefield successes, from the recapture of the Citadel in Hue City in the Tet Offensive of 1968, to Dinh's unheralded role in the seizure of Hamburger Hill a year later. However, their careers expose an ARVN that was over-politicized, tactically flawed, and dependent on American logistical and firepower support. Marginalized within an American war, ARVN faced a grim fate as U.S. forces began to exit the conflict. As the structure of the ARVN/U.S. alliance unraveled, Dinh and Hue were left alone to make the most difficult decisions of their lives.

Andrew Wiest weaves historical analysis with a compelling narrative, culled from extensive interviews with Dinh, Hue, and other key figures. Once both military superstars, Dinh is viewed by many within the South Vietnamese community as a traitor, while Hue, an expatriate living in northern Virginia, is seen as a hero who never let go of his ideals. Their experiences and legacies mirror that of the ARVN's rise and fall as well as the tragic history of South Vietnam.

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