



Kontum: The Battle to Save South Vietnam

By Thomas P. McKenna

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376 pages

Reviewed by Gerald Williams

Kontum: The Battle to Save Vietnam is a fascinating and pulse-racing account of what Thomas P. McKenna experienced during the Vietnam War. As a U.S. Army Infantry lieutenant colonel, McKenna gives his account of what he considers to be one of the lesser recognized battles of the Vietnam War. Throughout the book McKenna uses letter dates and material for verifying the events. I was also very appreciative of the preface, which lists the acronyms and terms that he uses throughout the book.

McKenna's descriptions of the Vietnam War and the struggles and complications from allies and enemies shed further light on a history worth knowing. In particular, working alongside allies such as the VNAF (South Vietnamese Air Force) was no easy task. However, McKenna's telling of how they dealt with the issues of evacuations and procedures during these events and how these differed from their South Vietnamese allies, makes for an interesting historical account of how cooperation between two fundamentally different countries can lead to success.

As mentioned before, McKenna uses many terms throughout his novel and as such it can be a little hard to keep them in mind. However, McKenna supplies a glossary that contains military abbreviations and jargon, making it easier for inexperienced readers of military texts to read and enjoy thoroughly. McKenna also includes illustrations which depict anything from positions of enemy lines to pictures of friends and allies during his time in Vietnam.

McKenna's overall flow in writing the book is also spot on. There are times in which McKenna slows down time by giving more background on himself and others. It is then that readers see the human element of those involved in the Vietnam War. Just when McKenna brings in the sense of home and friendship, those human elements are endangered by constant waves of attacks from the enemy. There is definitely more attention paid to the actions of the regiment versus human emotion; however, the addition of the latter helps to make his story more interesting than reading about the events from a history book.

Kontum: The Battle to Save Vietnam is an exhilarating and fact-driven book which seeks to reveal the battle of Kontum as it hasn't been revealed before. It is a story of humanity, conflict, and eventually resolution. For anyone who wants to know the technical side of a less recognized battle fought in Vietnam, this novel is an engaging and well-thought out read.