



Ripcord: Screaming Eagles Under Siege, Vietnam 1970

Keith Nolan

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On April 10, 1970, Hill 927 was occupied by troopers of the Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division. By July, the activities of the artillery and infantry of Ripcord had caught the attention of the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) and a long and deadly siege ensued. Ripcord was the Screaming Eagles' last chance to do significant damage to the NVA in the A Shau Valley before the division was withdrawn from Vietnam and returned to the United States.

At Ripcord, the enemy counterattacked with ferocity, using mortar and antiaircraft fire to inflict heavy casualties on the units operating there. The battle lasted four and a half months and exemplified the ultimate frustration of the Vietnam War: the inability of the American military to bring to bear its enormous resources to win on the battlefield. In the end, the 101st evacuated Ripcord, leaving the NVA in control of the battlefield. Contrary to the mantra "We won every battle but lost the war," the United States was defeated at Ripcord. Now, at last, the full story of this terrible battle can be told.

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