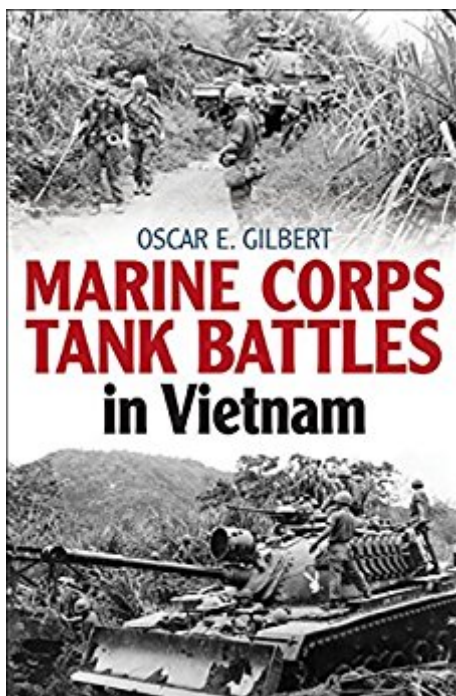


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Marine Corps Tank Battles In Vietnam



Synopsis

In 1965 the large, loud, and highly visible tanks of 3rd Platoon, B Company, 3rd Tank Battalion landed across a beach near Da Nang, drawing unwelcome attention to America's first, almost covert, commitment of ground troops in South Vietnam. As the Marine Corps presence grew inexorably, the 1st and 3rd Tank Battalions, as well as elements of the reactivated 5th Tank Battalion, were committed to the conflict. For the United States Marine Corps, the protracted and bloody struggle was marked by controversy, but for Marine Corps tankers it was marked by bitter frustration as they saw their own high levels of command turn their backs on some of the hardest-won lessons of tank-infantry cooperation learned in the Pacific War and in Korea. Nevertheless, like good Marines, the officers and enlisted men of the tank battalions sought out the enemy in the sand dunes, jungles, mountains, paddy fields, tiny villages, and ancient cities of Vietnam. Young Marine tankers fresh out of training, and cynical veterans of the Pacific War and Korea, battled two enemies. The battle-hardened Viet Cong were masters of the art of striking hard, then slipping away to fight another day. The highly motivated troops of the North Vietnamese Army, equipped with long-range artillery and able to flee across nearby borders into sanctuaries where the Marines were forbidden to follow, engaged the Marines in brutal conventional combat. Both foes were equipped with modern anti-tank weapons, and sought out the tanks as valuable symbolic targets. It was a brutal and schizophrenic war, with no front and no rear, absolutely no respite from constant danger, against a merciless foe hidden among a helpless civilian population. Some of the duties the tankers were called upon to perform were long familiar, as they provided firepower and mobility for the suffering infantry in a never-ending succession of search and destroy operations, conducted amphibious landings, and added their heavy guns to the artillery in fire support missions. Under constant threat of ambushes and huge command-detonated mines that could obliterate both tank and crew in an instant, the tankers escorted vital supply convoys, and guarded the engineers who built and maintained the roads. In their spare time the tankers guarded lonely bridges and isolated outposts for weeks on end, patrolled on foot to seek out the Viet Cong, operated roadblocks and ambushes, shot up boats to interdict the enemy's supply lines, and worked in the villages and hamlets to better the lives of the brutalized civilians. To the bitter end despite the harsh conditions of climate and terrain, confusion, endless savage and debilitating combat, and ultimate frustration as their own nation turned against the war the Marine tankers routinely demonstrated the versatility, dedication to duty, and matchless courage that Americans have come to expect of their Marines.

Book Information

File Size: 4067 KB

Print Length: 288 pages

Publisher: Casemate Publishers; 1st edition (February 26, 2013)

Publication Date: February 26, 2013

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00BBPWBNW

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #378,319 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #57

in Books > History > Military > Weapons & Warfare > Conventional > Armored Vehicles #169

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Military > Weapons & Warfare > Weapons #170

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Customer Reviews

I recently finished reading Ed Gilbert's "Marine Corps Tanks Battles in Vietnam". Before I was halfway through the book I had already ordered his book about Marine tanks in Korea. I intend to read all of his books on the subject. Although I am a former Marine tank crewman, I served on M60A1 tanks from 1980 to 1984. Thankfully I never had to endure combat. So I can't claim to have any personal knowledge about the accuracy of the book. But when I was in many of the senior SNCOs and a few of the Officers had been in Vietnam. None of the men that I knew are mentioned in the book, but the situations, the actions, the jargon, and everything else, described in the book ring true to what these men told us and taught us. There's something else too. The Marine Corps is smaller than the other services [other than the Coast Guard], much smaller. And tanks are a tiny little, obscure, corner of the Corps. Over the years very little has been written about the role of Marine armor. I appreciate Ed Gilbert bringing the courage, sacrifice, and combat skill of Marine tankers to life in this book. It's a good read.

This book provides a good insight into the life of a Marine Corps Tanker in Vietnam. Dr. Gilbert

gives a good, concise background of Vietnam and U.S. involvement in Vietnam prior to talking about USMC tank involvement in the conflict. Some of the sticking points of the book for me:-The misunderstandings of tank capabilities by Battalion and Division, thus throwing tanks into roles they were not best suited or intended for (i.e. long range artillery, guarding bridges, security on convoys, etc.)-The love/hate relationship that some of the Infantry had for the tanks (Some Grunts saw Tanks as bullet magnets);-Many of the accounts are based on oral interviews of those present at the time as opposed to written accounts or After Action Reports, thus resulting in events not necessarily sequenced and accounts not necessarily agreed on by all parties (Dr. Gilbert alludes to this in the beginning of the book and explains why accounts are as so and the reasons why there were not many written records available for USMC Tank Actions in Vietnam).Overall, a really good book. Recommended read for Tank Enthusiasts or Vietnam History buffs. Must read for USMC 1812's and 1802's

Good book that puts a light on a part of the war in Vietnam (a part of US History that many people have been misled about). Until a person reads this book they will not know the part that US Marine Corps Tankers played in the Vietnam War. For a better understanding of the Vietnam War I would also suggest reading Con Thien Hill of Angles and Praying for Slack. Both were written by Marines who served in the Marine Corps 3rd Division which operated up along the DMZ that divided South and North Vietnam. Con Thien Hill of Angles gives a very accurate account of the war just leading up to and briefly after the 1968 TET Offensive. Praying for Slack provides the reader with the experiences of a young 19 year old Marine assigned to Bravo Company, 5th Tank Battalion 5th Marine Division as the Marines in that Company unexpectedly leave Camp Pendleton as a unit (most Marines rotated into and out of units that were in the 1st and 3rd Marine Divisions) to support Marine Corps units in Vietnam and what combat was like for Marine Corps Tank crews who served in that Marine Corps tank company for the next 13 months along the infamous DMZ.

Very interesting book but is fragmented in it's story telling. Too often persons are brought in from "out of the blue" and then talked about for only 2 or 3 lines. I would have appreciated more information about the various operations that took place, where and when they happened and then include the individual stories of the men involved.

I spent 18 months with the 3rd Tank Battalion, 3rd Marine Division in Vietnam. This book represents my experience in Vietnam
Bill "JJ" Carroll
Sergeant Major
USMC Ret.

Tells a little known story of Marine operations in Viet Nam. A well written and well researched account.

I served in northern I Corps in 1969/70 with A Troop, 4/12 Cav, in the Army's 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division. There are a couple of statements which the author makes on page 207 which are incorrect. I have no idea where he got the idea that "Army tankers were not trained or tasked with recovery of their own wrecked vehicles." Believe me, Army tankers were trained and spent a lot of time recovering our stuck and disabled vehicles. The only times that I can think of where an Army tank was left in the bush for others to recover was if the tank or APC was so badly demolished or stuck in a crater that it was physically impossible to drag it out. I never saw that first hand. I did help pull out a lot of disabled tanks, however. The other curious statement was that "each crew position in an Army tank was a separate MOS." That is simply incorrect. The MOS for Armor Crewman back then was 11E ___. Army tankers were taught how to drive, load, and fire the gun in AIT. In Viet Nam some guys gravitated toward one position in their crew, such as driver or gunner, and stayed with that position for a long time. Some may have only held one job in the crew for their entire tour. Others rotated through various duty positions. There were not different MOS designations for each crew position in the Army, however. Other than those items, this seems to be an interesting book.

Army tank crews do not have a different MOS for each position they all have the same MOS and the rank is indicated by a skill level 1, 2, 3, 4. An author should investigate his subject matter before making such claims. As far as recovery goes, I don't recall ever being recovered by a recovery vehicle. Always every time without fail we did self recovery and evacuation within our own platoon. Usually the procedure was called a gang bang. Using our own tow cables we would chain any number of vehicles together, to provide whatever towing power was needed. Often this was 3 or 4. Wherever the author obtained his information, it is not accurate. There is enough misconception about the war, be more accurate.

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