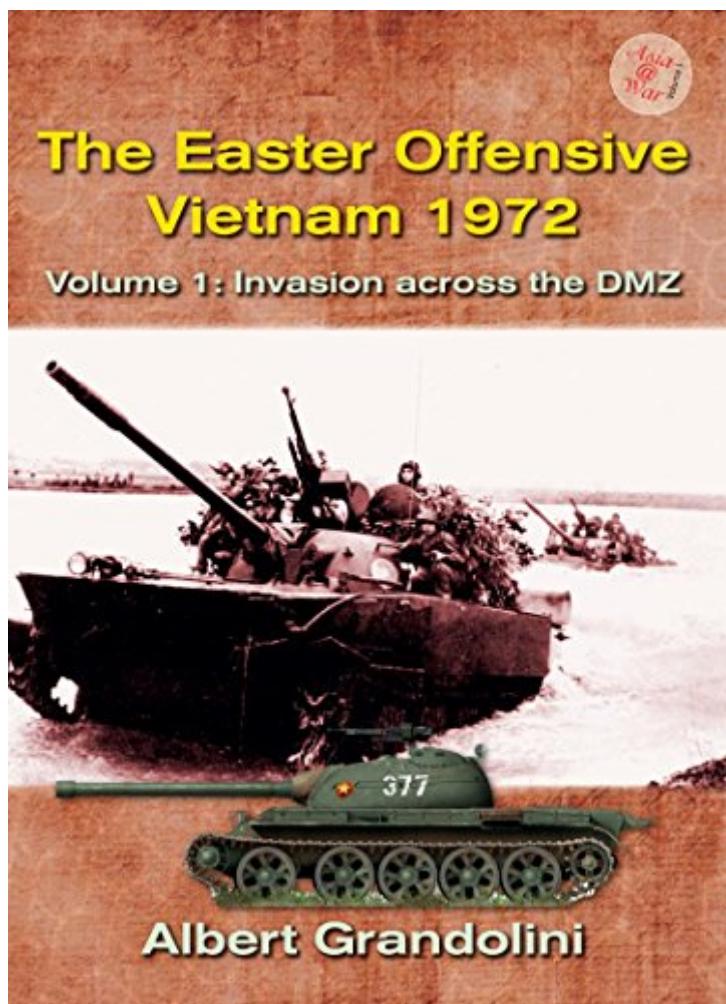


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# The Easter Offensive, Vietnam 1972. Volume 1: Invasion Across The DMZ (Asia@War)



## Synopsis

On 30 March 1972 the South Vietnamese positions along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separated the North from South Vietnam were suddenly shelled by hundreds of heavy guns and multiple rocket launchers. Caught in a series of outposts of what was the former *McNamara Line*, the shocked defenders had just enough time to emerge from their bunkers at the end of the barrage before they were attacked by regular North Vietnamese Army divisions, supported by hundreds of armored vehicles that crashed through their defensive lines along the border. Thus began one of the fiercest campaigns of the Vietnam War but also one of the less well documented because by then most of the American ground forces had been withdrawn. Following on from the details of the downsizing of American forces and the setting up of the *Vietnamization* policy, the build up of both the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in the South and the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) in the North is discussed at length. A special emphasis is devoted to the study of the development the North Vietnamese armored corps that would spearhead the coming offensive. Consequently, the nature of the war changed dramatically, evolving from a guerrilla one into a conventional conflict. The South Vietnamese resistance shuddered, and then crumbled under the communist onslaught, putting Hue the ancient imperial capital at risk. It was only thanks to US airpower, directed by a small group of courageous American advisers, which helped to turn the tide. Under the command of a new capable commander, the South Vietnamese then methodically counterattacked to retake some of the lost ground. This culminated in the ferocious street fighting for Quang Tri. This first volume describes the combat taking place in the northern part of South Vietnam, and uses not only American archives but also Vietnamese sources, from both sides. The book contains 130 photos, five maps and 18 color profiles. *Asia@War* - following on from our highly successful *Africa@War* series, *Asia@War* replicates the same format - concise, incisive text, rare images and high quality color artwork providing fresh accounts of both well-known and more esoteric aspects of conflict in this part of the world since 1945.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Just a quick look at the Order of Battle on page xii and I see it is a little off. For instance, the 24/304 took Camp Carroll (the infamous surrender of the 56th ARVN Regiment), while the 66/304 took Mai Loc. I don't see the 48th and 27th Infantry Regiments of the 320B who were busy at Cua and the Cam Lo vicinity. Also, the 36/308 went from Cam Lo towards Dong Ha. The 126th Regiment is actually the 126th Naval Sapper Regiment. On the next page, the 5th and 6th Independent Infantry Regiments are missing - with 324B, they served as a blocking force and kept 1st ARVN occupied. Page xv is missing the 312th NVA Division which was sent southward around the same time as the 325th. There are a number of problems and inaccuracies in Volume One, which obviously also pertains to Volume Two. This is by no means a comprehensive list. The Dong Ha Bridge was blown by Captain Ripley and Major Smock. It is not reported as "helped" as the author would have it (p.29). LTC Camper and MAJ Brown weren't "forced back under enemy fire" but as the CH-47 couldn't land outside the wire, so they headed back to the helipad (p. 25). Colonel (actually Lieutenant Colonel at the time) Turley played an important role in the battle around Quang Tri, taking over from the faltering ARVN 3rd Division senior adviser Colonel Donald J. Metcalf (p. 22). Since this was MG Giai's division and not a US division, one should ask where LTC Cuong, Giai's executive officer, was? Additionally, "faltering" has an implication that a US soldier who served in three wars would/should take umbrage at. As it is, many, if not most, US advisers were on the second and

even third tours in Vietnam, if ARVN officers really “resented the lack of combat experience” (p.9) then they did not really know their advisors. The author has obviously overlooked the cowardice in the surrender of Camp Carroll by LTC Dinh, nor was his broadcast afterward on Radio Hanoi calling for others to change sides - it was bad enough that the yearly ARVN AWOL average was 130,000 (it was a great deal higher during the Easter Offensive). The author obviously relied on Vietnamese sources for much of his narrative. I’m sure that the American soldiers who were there during the Easter Offensive, as I was, don’t appreciate besmirching our assistance in fighting North Vietnamese forces.

The Eastern Offensive Volume 1 DMZ is one of the best books I have read on this portion of the war in a while. This book tells the reader the composition of each army and its fighting abilities and its equipment. The key leader of each army is also covered and the personalities are discussed. Most Vietnam books give a short chapter to this offensive but this book describes the action in great detail. The ARVN capabilities during this action give it great praise. Great book

This book combined with its other part are the best I have seen on this particular subject. The author goes into great detail on the opposing forces, their equipment holdings, and how units were equipped. And just as important the author draws on Vietnamese sources for the engagements so one can get a better understanding not just of the NVA but of the ARVN itself and information on different ARVN task forces which were put together on operations. There are interesting bits regarding captured FANK equipment such as M-24s and AMX-13s being pressed into use. The book has excellent drawings of airplanes and armored vehicles and numerous photographs with helpful captions which also add to the value of the book. Totally worth it!

Awesome book!!! A great start to a much anticipated new series! Many praises to the author, Albert Grandolini, for his hard and accurate work, and to the publisher Helion.

Go to any Barnes and Noble, and its shelves are crammed with volume upon volume about the clashes of the armored titans on the Eastern Front in World War 2, or the Battle of the Bulge, or the Arab-Israeli’s wars. Look online and you find the Osprey specialized series and mainly book shops that will go into excruciating detail on certain units like Das Reich or battles like Kursk, to the 1941 Barbarossa battles on the frontiers that have that high sexiness quotient for the student of armored

warfare. It is easy to pass by books on the Vietnam War and armored warfare with a shrug, assuming that until the Fall of Saigon there was little of note in this field. Perhaps like me, you will find how wrong you were with that assumption and will now pull down Grandolini's two volumes on armored warfare in the war winning gamble by the General Giap of North Vietnam in 1972. When you open and peruse the two volumes, you will assume they are the standard low fare that many books of this type are, replete with bad writing, proofing errors, and generally disorganized. Instead, you may find yourself quite pleasantly surprised. I shamefully admit I dutifully read the first volume simply due to the fact that the folks at Helion had asked me to review it. Volume 1: Invasion across the DMZ was above average, but felt perhaps a little lacking at some level. Yet Invasion across the DMZ was just intriguing enough for me to plow full speed ahead and read the second volume Tanks in the Street. It was there that I found myself deeply immersed and understood how nicely the two volumes intersected in terms of both layout, history, and rich historical detail about a period most will know little about. My simple take away and conclusions on these two volumes is embarrassingly simple. Grandolini made me much smarter than I was about the 1972 Easter Offensive and contributed greatly to my further understanding of the Vietnam War. In addition, Grandolini, by the rich detail and command of facts and historical material, will surprise the reader with the introduction of new weapon systems in this series of battle. We find the use of a secret TOW unit of the 82nd Airborne and SAGGER AT-Missiles. The use of the SAGGER Anti-tank missile was a complete shock to me as conventional wisdom has it was not deployed until the 1973 Yom Kippur War. It was a nasty surprise to the Israelis in 1972, but much like the use of the KV series of tanks in the 1939-40 Soviet-Finnish Winter War that should have served notice that Soviet armored technology was ahead of their own, no one took notice of the employment of the SAGGER. This lack of good battlefield intelligence reporting by the Americans and lack of notice by the Israelis had catastrophic consequences for Israeli Armored units at the start of the Yom Kippur War. Grandolini in the first several chapters very neatly sets up the strategic and operational issues at this period in the Vietnam War. The North Vietnamese offensive here was at the height of President Nixon's Vietnamization policy, the turning over of ground combat operations to the South Vietnamese Army as US Army ground troops withdrew. The focus of Invasion across the DMZ is on the North Vietnamese drive to seize Quang Tri City, a provincial capital, in 1972 to either win the war outright in conjunction with other offensive thrusts, or to be used as a political bargaining chip in the ongoing peace talks in Paris. Grandolini makes good use of his understanding of internal South Vietnamese politics on why certain less-than-capable battlefield commanders initially held key positions until necessity forced President Thieu of South Vietnamese to take internal political risks to

himself by bringing forth more capable battlefield commanders. Grandolini also neatly brings forth the flavor of this meat grinder of a battle for both sides. But it's the second volume, *Tanks in the Street* where you begin to grasp Grandolini's deep understanding of the facts of this often ignored period of modern warfare. Here Grandolini's knowledge and ability to convey the battles for An Loc and Kontum simply shines, which gave me pause to consider that perhaps my initial reaction to Invasion across the DMZ was harsher than it deserved. It was in this volume that one reads about the deployment of the SAGGER missile system, as well as the deployment of the US TOW missile on jeeps by a secret detachment of the 82nd Airborne. His use of LTC (Ret) Willibanks' Combat Studies monograph, which I was previously familiar with, and later republished by the Indiana University Press, told the reviewer this work was deeper than one finds in most 72-page studies. Grandolini also introduces one of the more notorious characters at this juncture of the Vietnam War, John Paul Vann, whose story is told in greater depth in Neil Sheehan's *A Bright Shining Lie*. Grandolini could have allowed the Vann story to subsume the later part of this book but handles that story line deftly. Grandolini's writing style isn't always the most engaging. One might characterize it at best as steady and workmanlike, only punctuated by use of the annoying "whilst." But part of what might influence that view, is that both books are at times chopped up by the lavish use photographs and color plates of equipment. There are maps in the book but the Table of Contents doesn't tell the reader that, nor does the text refer back to them. The books may be thin on analysis and going into great detail on doctrine, but it's there, evidenced by his references to the South Vietnamese employment of hunter-killer armor teams. What Grandolini does very well is weave together a good historical vignettes that incorporates the political dynamics of both sides, the continued American involvement with advisors on the battlefield, the heavy reliance on American tactical airpower, and the fact that the South Vietnamese armor was often under-gunned by the Soviet supplied tanks of the North Vietnamese Army. You will be surprised not only by the number of armored fighting vehicles employed in these two volumes but also by the immense logistical effort undertaken by the North Vietnamese to simply move them to the South. If you have any interest in armored warfare, these are two very nice additions to one's library. They fill in some interesting gaps in both Vietnam history, the history of the South and North Vietnamese Armies, as well as MOUT warfare. It's not as scholarly as say Showalter's *Panzers*, but the two volumes will both entertain and educate you. Expect to be very pleasantly surprised.

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