



Nine Days in May: The Battles of the 4th Infantry Division on the Cambodian Border, 1967

Warren K. Wilkins

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Moving through the jungle near the Cambodian border on May 18, 1967, a company of American infantry observed three North Vietnamese Army regulars, AK-47s slung over their shoulders, walking down a well-worn trail in the rugged Central Highlands. Startled by shouts of “Lai day, lai day” (“Come here, come here”), the three men dropped their packs and fled. The company commander, a young lieutenant, sent a platoon down the trail to investigate. Those few men soon found themselves outnumbered, surrounded, and fighting for their lives. Their first desperate moments marked the beginning of a series of bloody battles that lasted more than a week, one that survivors would later call “the nine days in May border battles.”

Nine Days in May is the first full account of these bitterly contested battles. Part of Operation Francis Marion, they took place in the Ia Tchar Valley and the remote jungle west of Pleiku. Fought between three American battalions and two North Vietnamese Army regiments, this prolonged, deadly encounter was one of the largest, most savage actions seen by elements of the storied 4th Infantry Division in Vietnam. Drawing on interviews with the participants, Warren K. Wilkins recreates the vicious fighting in gripping detail.

This is a story of extraordinary courage and sacrifice displayed in a series of battles that were fought and won within the context of a broader, intractable strategic stalemate. When the guns finally fell silent, an unheralded American brigade received a Presidential Unit Citation and earned three of the twelve Medals of Honor awarded to soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division in Vietnam.



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