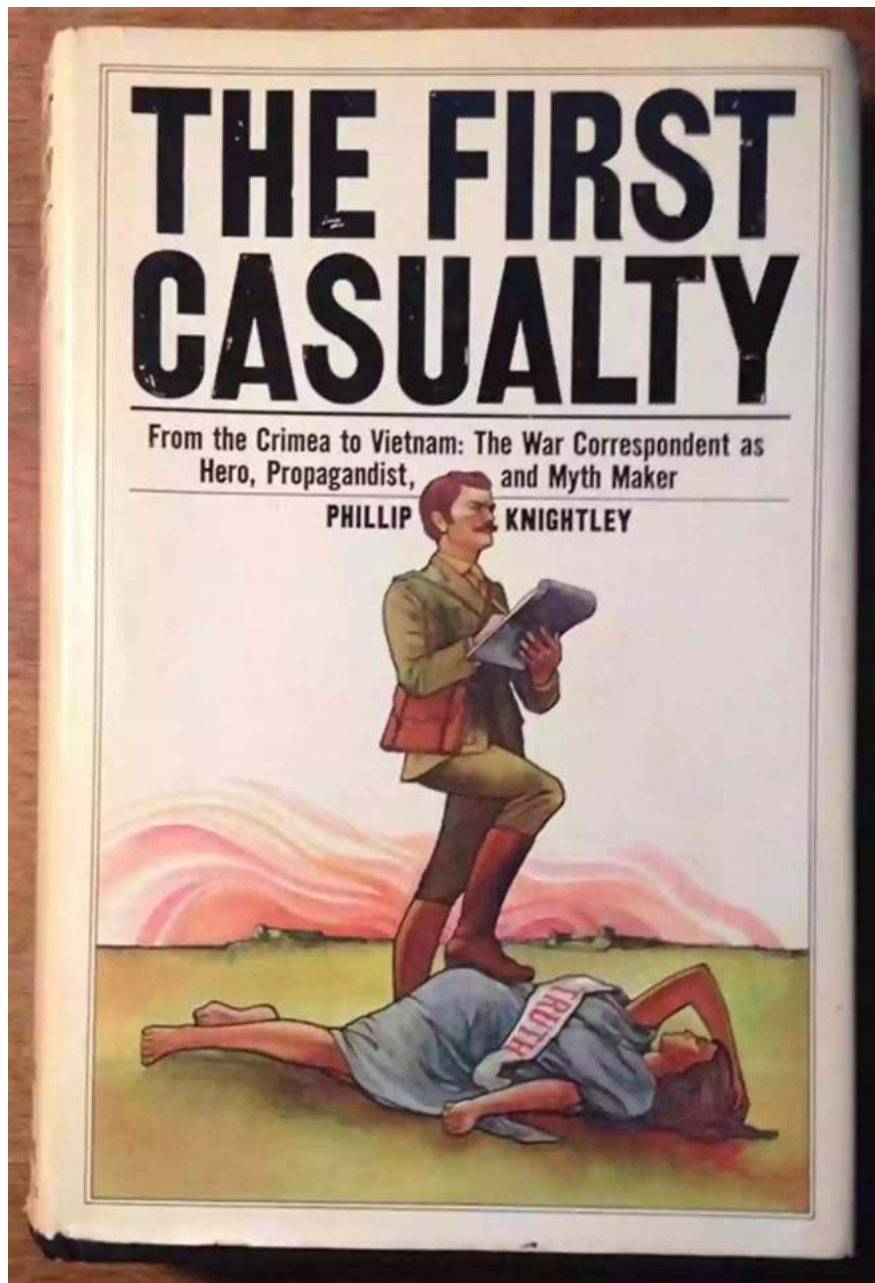
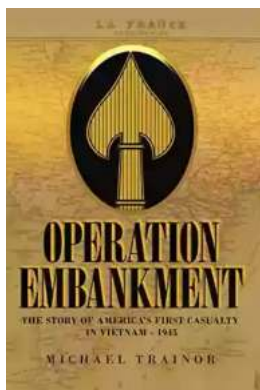


The Story Of America's First Casualty In Vietnam 1945



When we think of the Vietnam War, many names come to our minds - Ho Chi Minh, the Viet Cong, the Tet Offensive, the My Lai Massacre. However, there's a lesser-known but significant event that kick-started America's involvement in Vietnam and became the nation's very first casualty in the war.

In 1945, as World War II was coming to an end, the United States found itself gradually getting involved in the conflict between the French colonialists and Vietnamese nationalists led by Ho Chi Minh. The seeds for America's future engagement in Vietnam were planted even before the war officially ended.



OPERATION EMBANKMENT: THE STORY OF AMERICA'S FIRST CASUALTY IN VIETNAM - 1945

by Manoj Desai(Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 3374 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 593 pages
Lending : Enabled



The OSS and Ho Chi Minh

During the final years of World War II, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), worked closely with Ho Chi Minh and his Viet Minh independence movement, considering them as strategic allies against the Japanese occupation in Indochina.

While the United States was initially supportive of Vietnamese nationalism, their focus soon shifted to Cold War politics. As the French sought to regain their colonial control over Vietnam, the U.S. shifted its stance and sided with the French, seeing them as essential allies in preventing the spread of communism.

The Death of Owen Eugene Honeycutt

On May 8, 1945, Owen Eugene Honeycutt, an American technical sergeant, became the first American casualty in Vietnam. Serving as an OSS radio operator, Honeycutt was captured and later executed by the Japanese-backed Viet Minh forces in Tu Vu, a small village in northern Vietnam.

This little-known event marked the beginning of American bloodshed in Vietnam and set the stage for decades of conflicts and loss of lives in the region.

The Forgotten Hero

Owen Eugene Honeycutt, born on March 31, 1921, in North Carolina, was the son of a cotton mill worker. Even from a young age, he showed a deep sense of service and patriotism. He enlisted in the U.S. Army and joined the OSS to fight against fascism and uphold American values.

Despite the sacrifice he made and the pivotal role he played, Honeycutt's story remained relatively overlooked and underappreciated, overshadowed by the later, larger-scale involvement of the United States in Vietnam.

A Legacy of Tragedy and Controversy

Following Honeycutt's death, the United States continued to support France's efforts to reclaim Vietnam, ultimately leading to the devastating Vietnam War, which lasted from 1955 until 1975. The war would go on to claim the lives of over 58,000 American soldiers and millions of Vietnamese civilians, leaving scars that are still felt today.

The conflict in Vietnam sparked widespread protests and engendered public skepticism towards military interventions. It left a lasting legacy of trauma for the soldiers who fought there, as well as the Vietnamese people who endured unimaginable suffering.

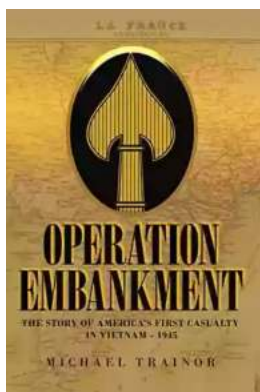
Remembering Owen Eugene Honeycutt

It is crucial to remember and honor the sacrifices of brave individuals like Owen Eugene Honeycutt, who became America's first casualty in Vietnam. His story serves as a poignant reminder of the complex web of politics, ideologies, and human lives that shaped the conflict.

Today, as we reflect on history, let us not forget Honeycutt's contribution and the countless other lives affected by the Vietnam War. By remembering the past, we strive to better understand the experiences of those involved and lay the groundwork for a more peaceful future.

The story of America's first casualty in Vietnam, Owen Eugene Honeycutt, is a somber reminder of the tragic consequences that can arise from geopolitical decisions. It highlights the complex nature of warfare and the lasting impact it has on nations and individuals.

As we move forward, let us strive to learn from history, celebrate the heroism of those who came before us, and work towards a world where the stories of first casualties become distant memories of a past overshadowed by peace and understanding.



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In the summer of 1945, the war against the Japanese was still raging. The turning point in the war against Japan came in early August. The first atomic bombs were dropped and shortly thereafter the Japanese surrendered. The primary task, once the fighting stopped, was the disarmament of the Japanese Army. The British Army was designated to head up this process. With the bulk of their forces located in India, Burma and Malaya; they had insufficient military units available in Thailand and Indochina to carry out the disarmament.

Although there were French military units present in Indochina, they were all imprisoned as a result of a Japanese coup carried out in March 1945. The only credible military forces belonged to the Vietnamese Liberation Front, commonly known as the Viet Minh. The leader of the Viet Minh was Ho Chi Minh. On September 2nd, he declared Vietnamese independence. With neither the British nor the French Army able to restrain them, the Vietnamese nationalists quickly consolidated their power in Hanoi and made similar preparations to do so in Saigon.

In August of 1945, Lieutenant A. Peter Dewey was assigned to lead the first OSS team into Saigon, Indochina. The mission was named Operation Embankment. It was anticipated it would be a typical OSS operation, involving ambushes and sabotage. However, with the war finished, its mission changed. Operation Embankment would collect top-secret information for the U.S. State Department. On September 1st, the first contingent of Operation Embankment, under Lieutenant Emile Counasse, arrived in Saigon. They were overwhelmed by the rampant disorder and random violence they witnessed. Attacks against the French Colons occurred daily and the majority of French citizens were terrified.

Dewey and the rest of the Embankment team arrived on September 4, 1945. They hit the ground running. Within days, Dewey and his team were sending reports back to OSS Headquarters in Kandy, Ceylon. Most of his information came from French and Vietnamese informants, especially the Viet Minh. When the French discovered Dewey was meeting with their avowed enemies, the Viet Minh, they were furious. They felt betrayed. After Dewey's heroics in Southern France, they had considered him to be one of their own.

Into this explosive atmosphere a new element was added, General Douglas Gracey. On September 13, 1945, Gracey, along with a small expeditionary force, landed in Saigon. Gracey was a believer in "Old School" military discipline. Almost immediately, he clashed with the less formal OSS and its leader, Peter Dewey. Gracey wanted to crush the Vietnamese independence movement and restore Indochina to French colonial rule. Dewey, on the other hand, realized the British and French would never be able to regain control over Indochina. He presciently described the futility of trying to restore French colonial rule when he stated, "Cochinchina is burning, the French and the British are being destroyed here and we should stay out of Southeast Asia." In their ongoing duel, Gracey was continually frustrated by Dewey's intellect and wit. After a particularly rancorous conference with Dewey, Gracey decided he had enough. On September 23rd he ordered Dewey out as a "persona non grata". He was ordered to leave on September 26, 1945.

On the morning of September 26th, after waiting several hours for his flight, Dewey and his executive officer, Major Herbert Bluechel, returned for lunch to Embankment's villa adjacent to Tan Son Nhut Airfield. As they were approaching the villa, they were ambushed. In the ambush, Dewey was murdered. Luckily, Bluechel managed to escape back to the villa. Dewey's body, along with his jeep, disappeared. They were never found nor was the group responsible for Dewey's death ever identified.



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