



Grab Their Belts to Fight Them: The Viet Cong's Big Unit-War Against the U.S., 1965-1966

Warren Wilkins

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"During 1965 and 1966," wrote Dale Andrade, a historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History, "the Communists fought the Americans toe to toe, making little effort to act like guerillas." Indeed, despite pronounced disadvantages in firepower and mobility, the Communist Vietnamese endeavored to crush South Vietnam and expel the American military with a strategy predicated on "big unit" war. Orchestrated by a militant clique in Hanoi, the "big unit" war was designed to yield a quick and decisive victory over South Vietnam. Exploiting an extensive array of Communist Vietnamese sources, including seldom utilized unit histories and battle studies, *Grab Them by Their Belts* chronicles in rich detail the formation, development, and participation of the Viet Cong in the opening stanza of the Communist big unit war against the Americans, and how the ultimate failure of that war profoundly influenced the decision to launch the Tet Offensive.

Grab Them by their Belts, unlike much of the existing body English literature on the Vietnam War, mined the expansive Communist historiography on the conflict to craft an authentic and accurate account of the big unit war from a Communist perspective. Communist memoirs, unit histories, and battlefield studies were extensively consulted to reconstruct the formation and deployment of major VC/NVA military units, battles and campaigns, and the overarching strategic debates that informed the big unit war. Additionally, *Grab Them by Their Belts* recounts how the Communist big unit war reflected the desire to crush South Vietnam quickly and decisively, and how the failure of that war influenced the decision to launch the Tet Offensive.

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