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The Algerian War 1954-62 (Men-at-Arms)



Synopsis

It is hard to convey the public impact of France's war to maintain her colonial grip on Algeria; yet in the late 1950s this ugly conflict dominated Europe's media to almost the same extent as would Vietnam ten years later. It brought France to the very verge of military coup d'etat; it destroyed thousands of careers; bitterly divided the French military and political classes for a generation; and sent hundreds of thousands of European settler families into often ruinous exile. This title details the history, organisation, equipment and uniforms of the forces involved in the Algerian War (1954-1962).

Book Information

Series: Men-at-Arms (Book 312)

Paperback: 48 pages

Publisher: Osprey Publishing; 1st Ed. edition (November 15, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1855326582

ISBN-13: 978-1855326583

Product Dimensions: 7.2 x 0.1 x 9.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (11 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #316,448 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in [Books > History > Africa > Algeria](#) #674 in [Books > History > Europe > France](#) #8864 in [Books > History > Military](#)

Customer Reviews

This book is an excellent reference for anyone seeking quick information on the Algerian War. Mr. Windrow does a fine job of synthesizing this long and complicated conflict into its basic elements. The book is a short 48 pages and done in the traditional format of the Osprey Men-at-Arms series. It contains over three dozen black and white photos of the Algerian landscape, French paratroopers, and fighters of the Army of National Liberation (ALN). The ALN was the military wing of the FLN, which was the political organization. The book also contains eight color plates with three figures per plate. Each figure represents a different uniform from either the French or the ALN. Each figure is clearly drawn and the plates provide excellent color companions to the black and white photos found throughout the book. At the end of the book, each illustrated figure is described in detail. In some cases, however, the narrative is too detailed and thus, extremely tedious reading. The second chapter provides a helpful summary of the entire war. This chapter is a quick chronological

reference to all significant events in the war, such as the Battle of Algiers, the Battle of the Frontiers, the Challe Plan offensive, and the Barricades Week. Subsequent chapters provide a breakdown of the ALN and how it was deployed over six geographic areas known as Wilayas. The author then does the same for the French forces. He first describes the poorly trained Sector troops. The author then discusses the General Reserve, more commonly known as "Les Paras." These mobile interventionist forces came from two Parachute Divisions. Mr. Windrow ends the main section of the book with a description of the 1961 mutiny in the French army.

After the Loss of Indochina, Algeria became more interested in the need for independence but for some Algeria was the Jewel of the Empire and especially for the Troops that have been their second nation like the French Foreign Legion who have fought for 134 years, many Muslims were pro-French but with the passage of time the pressure for Muslim rights, internal self-government, independence, or even complete integration with France had long been building up among the small but significant academic and professional class which had benefited from the French education. The post-war French loss of Syria and Lebanon, military reverse in Indochina and events in Tunisia and Morocco all prepared the ground for rebellion in Algeria. The ALN tried to emulate the VIETMINH, but never enjoyed the VIETMINH'S greatest asset, an area they could control and in which they could hide up and remain secure. After 8 years of war on March 1962 a cease-fire was finally arranged between government and FLN representatives at Evian, France. In the long-awaited referendum, held the following July, Algeria voted overwhelmingly for independence. The colonies began a mass evacuation; before the end of the year most of them had left the country.

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