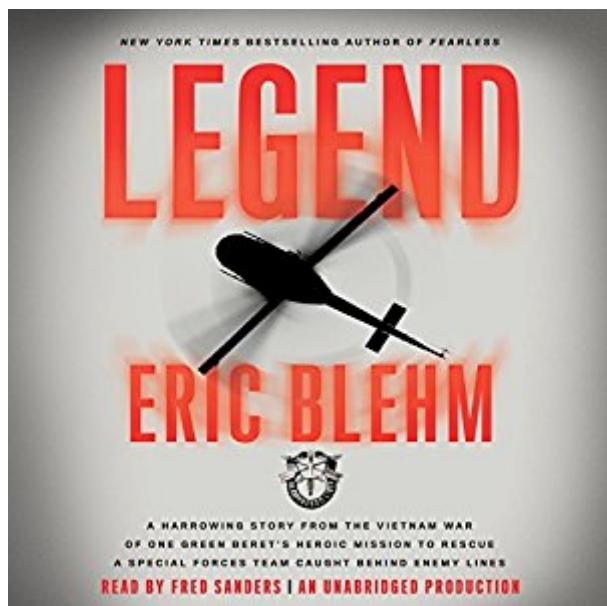


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# Legend: A Harrowing Story From The Vietnam War Of One Green Beret's Heroic Mission To Rescue A Special Forces Team Caught Behind Enemy Lines



## Synopsis

The unforgettable account and courageous actions of the US Army's 240th Assault Helicopter Company and Green Beret Staff Sergeant Roy Benavidez, who risked everything to rescue a Special Forces team trapped behind enemy lines. In *Legend*, acclaimed best-selling author Eric Blehm takes as his canvas the Vietnam War as seen through a single mission that occurred on May 2, 1968. A 12-man Special Forces team had been covertly inserted into a small clearing in the jungles of neutral Cambodia - where US forces were forbidden to operate. Their objective, just miles over the Vietnam border, was to collect evidence that proved the North Vietnamese Army was using the Cambodian sanctuary as a major conduit for supplying troops and materiel to the south via the Ho Chi Minh Trail. What the team didn't know was that they had infiltrated a section of jungle that concealed a major enemy base. Soon they found themselves surrounded by hundreds of NVA, under attack, low on ammunition, stacking the bodies of the dead as cover in a desperate attempt to survive the onslaught. When Special Forces Staff Sergeant Roy Benavidez heard the distress call, he jumped aboard the next helicopter bound for the combat zone without hesitation. Orphaned at the age of seven, Benavidez had picked cotton alongside his family as a child and dropped out of school as a teen before joining the army. Although he was grievously wounded during his first tour of duty in Vietnam and told he would never walk again, Benavidez fought his way back - ultimately earning his green beret. What followed would become legend in the Special Operations community. Flown into the foray of battle by the courageous pilots and crew of the 240th Assault Helicopter Company, Benavidez jumped from the hovering aircraft and ran nearly 100 yards through withering enemy fire. Despite being immediately and severely wounded, Benavidez reached the perimeter of the decimated team, provided medical care, and proceeded to organize an extraordinary defense and rescue. During the hours-long battle, he was bayoneted, shot, and hit by grenade shrapnel more than thirty times, yet he refused to abandon his efforts until every survivor was out of harm's way. Written with extensive access to family members, surviving members of the 240th Assault Helicopter Company, on-the-ground eyewitness accounts never before published, as well as recently discovered archival and declassified military records, Blehm has created a riveting narrative both of Roy Benavidez's life and career and of the inspiring, almost unbelievable events that defined the brotherhood of the air and ground warriors in an unpopular war halfway around the world. *Legend* recounts the courage and commitment of those who fought in Vietnam in service of their country and the story of one of the many unsung heroes of the war, whose actions would be scrutinized for more than a decade in a battle for a long overdue and what many believe was an unjustly denied Medal of Honor. The case was reopened 13 years later, in 1980, when a long-lost -

and believed dead - Green Beret eyewitness whom Benavidez had rescued that day came forth and wrote a statement that revealed, once and for all, what happened on that fateful day in May of 1968.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

As I read this book, I was brought back to a warm, sunny Friday afternoon ten years ago at the old Walter Reed Hospital. As a military retiree, my wife had just gone through major surgery and I was taking a break with a sandwich on the front steps that overlooked the lawn that covered the underground parking lot. Two young soldiers in PT gear, both with one artificial leg below the knee (one right and one left) came out with their wives/girlfriends. They hobbled down the steps, sat down to have a snack, then one looked at the other and said, "Let's do this." They grabbed each other's hand, and slowly, slowly made their way up the steps. When they got to the top, they raised their arms in a Rocky-like celebration. I didn't know whether to cheer or cry. Why this long introduction to a book review? Because, whether we as a people deserve it or not, this country continues to produce young men and women who go in harm's way to protect our freedoms. Even if you don't agree with the politics that sent them to foreign lands, the two soldiers I observed, like this book's subject, Roy Benavidez, have gone where few in this country will ever go. The book itself starts slow, spending a great deal of time on the humble Texas beginnings of Sgt Benavidez. While slow reading, this introduction provides the background for the character traits that made him such an outstanding soldier. He not only survived one serious wounding, but came back as a Green Beret to become one of many heroes in a cross-border conflict on 2 May 1968, which is the focus of this story. There is a lot of military jargon used in the telling, but it is well referenced.

I enjoy military history and reading books about soldiers whose acts of bravery seem like things no humans should be able to do. There are a lot of books like these available and this is one that is well worth reading. The Vietnam War has gotten some recent attention with the anniversary of the fall of Saigon. While I was not even a teenager when the war ended I have always wanted to understand it better because it was a topic that was talked and at times argued about by everyone I knew. Legend is a true account of a team of 12 special forces soldiers who were inserted into neutral Cambodia to monitor North Vietnamese activity in 1968. The team did not know that there was a nearby North Vietnamese base and the men were quickly surrounded. Special Forces Staff Sergeant Roy Benavidez volunteered to help rescue the men only to be seriously wounded and belatedly awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions. While this book does place the battle in a historical context a good portion of the book is recreating what happened during the battle. The author does a good job recreating the battle and at the same time allowing the reader to get to know the Americans involved. Sergeant Benavidez is the hero of the book. His recovery and the awards he received are covered in the book. He finally received the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1981, in part because American troops were not supposed to have been in Cambodia in 1968. Interestingly the citation for valor for his Congressional Medal of Honor does not mention Cambodia, only that the men were inserted in a dense jungle area west of Loc Ninh, Vietnam. I smiled when I read the citation for valor listing all that Sergeant Benavidez did to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

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