



The Son Tay Raid: American POWs in Vietnam Were Not Forgotten (Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series)

John Gargus

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In May 1970, aerial photographs revealed what U.S. military intelligence believed was a POW camp near the town of Son Tay, twenty-three miles west of North Vietnam's capital city. When American officials decided the prisoners were attempting to send signals, they set in motion a daring plan to rescue the more than sixty air-men thought to be held captive. On November 20, a joint group of volunteers from Army Green Berets and Air Force Special Operations Forces perfectly executed the raid, only to find the prisoners' quarters empty; the POWs had been moved to a different location. Initially, the Son Tay raid was a devastating disappointment to the men who risked their lives to carry it out. Many vocal critics labeled it as a spectacular failure of our nation's intelligence network. However, subsequent events proved that the audacity of the rescue attempt stunned the North Vietnamese, who implemented immediate changes in the treatment of their captives. They consolidated all Americans from their incarceration in camps to a single downtown Hanoi location where prisoners could take better care of each other.

The operation also restored the prisoners' faith that their nation had not forgotten them. John Gargus not only participated in the planning phase of the Son Tay rescue, but also flew as a lead navigator for the strike force. In the last few years, he has immersed himself in relevant documents that have been declassified. He has also conducted extensive interviews with others involved in the secret mission. "The Son Tay Raid" incorporates this wealth of unpublished material - air operations planning and training, ground preparation, interviews, and even North Vietnamese perspectives - with Gargus' own experience. No previous account of this top-secret action has given so many details or such insight into both the execution and results of Son Tay. This book will be an invaluable addition to the history and historiography of the Vietnam War.

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