

The History of the French Foreign Legion, Part V

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, March 20, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- We are nearly finished with our expansive history of the [French Foreign Legion](#)! It's been a wild ride so far. Now, let's take a look at the French Foreign Legion's activities during the mid-20th Century.

The Indochina Wars

World Wars I and II are over, but that doesn't mean there isn't plenty of action for the remaining Legionnaires. Shortly after the Second World War claimed the lives of over 9,000 of their brethren, members of the [French Foreign Legion went](#) to war in Vietnam, participating in what is now known as the French Indochina War.

The scope of this war was relatively narrow, compared to the expansive and complicated conflicts that characterized WWI and WWII. It centered on Vietnamese independence. After decades of French occupation and control, first as a protectorate from 1883 to 1939, and then as a possession, until 1945, Nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh declared his country's right to rule itself, independent of France's control.

Some 30,000 Legionnaires were dispatched to fight for France's interests in Asia. Many of them were organized into an entirely new type of unit using a new mode of transportation: parachute battalions. One of these eventually coalesced into the now well-known 1st Foreign Parachute Regiment (1er Régiment étranger de parachutistes). However, this novel fighting force wasn't enough to stabilize and secure French colonial interests in Vietnam. The conflict ended in 1954 with the defeat of [French Foreign Legion paratroops](#) by the Vietnamese "Iron Division" at Dien Bien Phu. Three days later, the French surrendered. Unfortunately, the Legionnaires bore the brunt of the French losses, with some 10,000 fatalities — fully one-third of the men who were tapped to fight in Vietnam over the course of the nine-year war.

Back to Algeria — Temporarily

After a short period spent licking its wounds, the French Foreign Legion was repatriated to Algeria. There, it fought in the Algerian War of Independence but didn't fare too well in that fight, either. When de Gaulle, now France's president, decided to pull out of Algeria, Legionnaires were incensed. After all, Algeria was home to the French Foreign Legion, and so integral to its identity that its men were willing to fight their home country in order to maintain an association with the African city. In fact, one Legion battalion did just that, mounting a military rebellion against de Gaulle in 1961.

The French Foreign Legion narrowly escaped abolishment as punishment for this mutiny, but ended up intact — if scattered across the French territories, its units weakened and chastised. That brings us to the current day, thereby ending our exploration of the French Foreign Legion's history. We hope you have enjoyed this series of posts!

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