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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

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## Customer Reviews

Packed with specially commissioned artwork, maps and diagrams, the Men-at-Arms series is an unrivalled illustrated reference on the history, organisation, uniforms and equipment of the world's military forces, past and present.

Martin Windrow is series editor at Osprey and an authority on the post-war French army, particularly the Foreign Legion. He is the author of the very successful Men-at-Arms 300: French Foreign Legion since 1945 and Men-at-Arms 322: The French War in Indochina 1946-1954.

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. This mutiny had a significant affect on the final outcome of the war. This book will not provide the reader with any significant understanding of the conflict. It will, however, serve as an excellent complement to other books on the topic. The author makes reference to Alistair Horne's: *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-62*. Mr. Horne's book is often cited as the definitive story of this war. Bottom line: when read in conjunction with a more comprehensive work on the Algerian War, this book provides an excellent reference guide to the significant events and the military forces engaged in the conflict.

This is a conflict that France obsesses over like America does Vietnam. It reflects a loss on many levels and will be debated for decades. Currently, the Algerian conflict offers lessons for insurgencies and terrorist actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. I am fan overall of Osprey and their library of titles. For me they act as a great introduction to a piece of history that often prompts me to research and read more deeply on the subject. And that happened in this case as the Algerian conflict is fascinating. I have been trying to get my hands on *France and the Algerian War* by Alexander to continue my follow-up.

I had heard of this bloody war, but didn't know much about it. In this 48-page softbound book, there are intriguing photos, diagrams and accounts of France's war in one of its colonies in the 1950's and

60's. I had a much better understanding of this war and the outcome of French-Arab relations once it was over. It is a definitive history of the French-Algerian war, and I recommend it. One small criticism, however, is that it is too short. A book that dives deeper into the conflict, with more information on the origins of the War and its eventual outcome, would have been helpful.

Vision sharp and to the point of the conflict

Great Book

After the Loss of Indochina, Algeria became more interested in the need for independence but for some time Algeria was the Jewel of the Empire and specially 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. Martin Windrow comes again with another title dedicated to another War of French Decolonization (check The French Indochina War 1946-54 MMA322) this time we enter the Algerian War in North Africa, with a quick overview of the war and a summary of main events between 1954-1962, I like the comments on The Army of National Liberation (Command Structure) and the French Army in Algeria with all their troops from Zouaves to Natives, a part dedicated to the Mutiny of April and Select Bibliography (Small) The Book is small but helps me see the War in a quick look, with good photos and superb colour artwork by Mike Chappell. We can see the ANL and the French Army Uniforms in Color (great plates on General Marcel Bigeard famous for the torture of Algerians) For more books on the Wars of Decolonization see Anthony Clayton "The Wars of French Decolonization" and "France, Soldiers, and Africa" these two titles one dedicated to the French Troops in Africa from 1830 to 1962 and the other to the Wars of Liberation of the Colonial Rule Tunisia, Madagascar, Morocco,

Indochina and Algeria. Martin Windrow is the author of 5 books on the French Army, French Foreign Legion 1914-45, The French Indochina War 1946-54, French Foreign Legion-Infantry and Cavalry since 1945 and French Foreign Legion Paratroops all from Osprey military History Books. For books on the Algerian War, The Battle of the Casbah by Paul Aussaresses, The Memory of Resistance by Martin Evans, The French Foreign Legion by Douglas Porch, All the major operations in the Algerian War and The Algerian War and the French Army, 1954-62 by Martin S. Alexander, The Movie of Anthony Quinn The Lost Command (1966) is dedicated to Algeria and the another movie "The Battle of Algiers" is also a great story on the War and the violent counter-terrorist measures used by the French Army. Anthony Clayton also has another book dedicated to the Post War Era but explores all the major conflict only in Africa, "Frontiersmen-Warfare in Africa since 1950"

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