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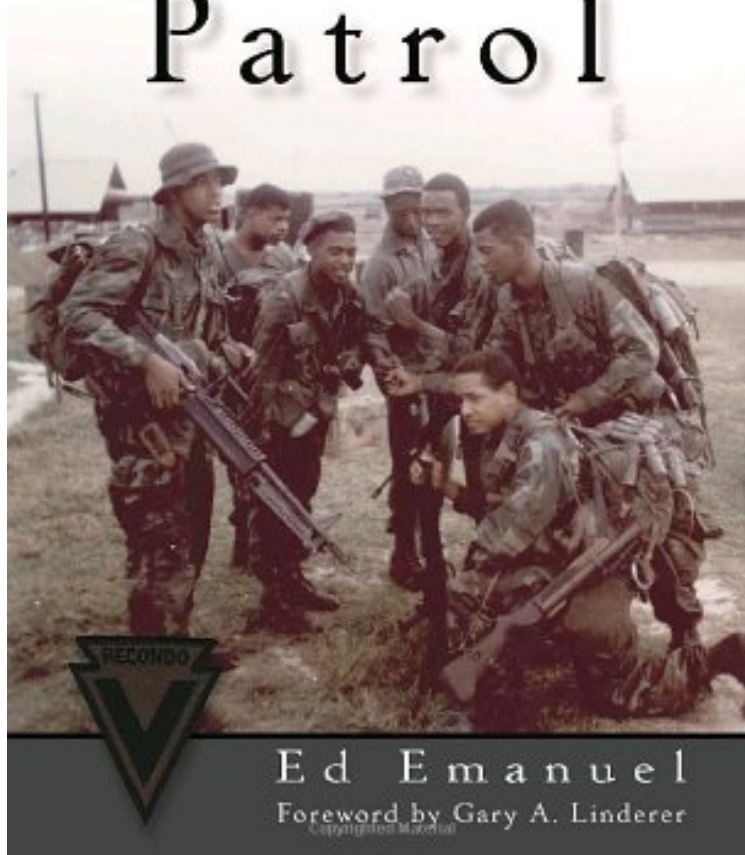
Ed Emanuel

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The riveting true story of the first
African American LRRP team in Vietnam

SOUL Patrol



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Ed Emanuel : Soul Patrol: The Riveting True Story of the First African American LRRP Team in Vietnam before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Soul Patrol: The Riveting True Story of the First African American LRRP Team in Vietnam:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Memories, good and bad
By S. Daily
If you were a VN soldier in combat, if you were on the ground in VN then you will want to read this riveting book of one soldier's challenges during this war. It brought back a lot of memories for me, including the smell, the food and the RR. I was proud to serve and reading the Soul Patrol reaffirmed this belief.
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The untold role of African-Americans in Vietnam
By Clarence
This shares a prospective of the Long Range Patrol team that generally is not highlighted by the media. There were many teams that were composed of all-black troops. We often experienced racism in Vietnam but no one talked about it. I met and served with some of the bravest guys that one could image. They were of various races and colors. I thought some of the South Vietnamese rangers were gallant. Ed Emanuel wrote an outstanding book. Thank you fellow trooper...Airborne!
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. War has no preference
By Kenneth Riley
This was an excellent book on a Black LRRP team in Vietnam... The only difference was that they were African American... The horror is the same... Bullets really do not recognize race, creed, color or religious calling (Hate the war... Not the Warrior)

LRRPs had to be the best. Anything less meant certain death. When Ed Emanuel was handpicked for the first African American special operations LRRP team in Vietnam, he knew his six-man team couldn't have asked for a tougher proving ground than Cu Chi in the summer of 1968. Home to the largest Viet Cong tunnel complex in Vietnam, Cu Chi was the deadly heart of the enemy's stronghold in Tay Ninh Province. Team 2/6 of Company F, 51st Infantry, was quickly dubbed the Soul Patrol, a gimmicky label that belied the true depth of their courage. Stark and compelling, Emanuel's account provides an unforgettable look at the horror and the heroism that became the daily fare of LRRPs in Vietnam. Every mission was a tightrope walk between life and death as Emanuel's team penetrated NVA bases, sidestepped lethal booby traps, or found themselves ambushed and forced to fight their way back to the LZ to survive. Emanuel's gripping memoir is an enduring testament to the valor of all American LRRPs, who courageously risked their lives so that others might be free.

From the Inside Flap
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About the Author
Ed Emanuel is a military veteran and documentary filmmaker. He served as one of six men on Team 2/6 of Company F, 51st Infantry—also known as Soul Patrol—the first African American special operations LRRP team during the Vietnam War. He now lives in California.
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CHAPTER ONE
"What the Hell Am I Doing Here?"
The date was June 6, 1968. These were turbulent times in America. Splattered across the front page of every major newspaper were the ominous signs of social discontent. The mass anarchy and student unrest on college campuses around the country were at an all-time high. The chaos and disorder were largely due to the Vietnam War. As a nation, we were in mourning. The day before we'd lost another great leader, as Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was gunned down in the hotel kitchen of the old Coconut Grove in downtown Los Angeles. Somehow I knew he would never become president, even though he was the front-runner during most of the presidential primaries. It was the "one" time I hated being right about a premonition. Still fresh in my mind was the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who had been assassinated on his motel balcony in Memphis, Tennessee, just a few weeks before. These assassinations were a clear indication that a network of social demons was staunchly in place and working at full force.
I was en route to Southeast Asia. Destination, the Republic of South Vietnam! My eight months of infantry training resulted in my being flown across the Pacific Ocean to a place that would change my life forever. Around 1100 hours, and after almost twenty hours of flying time with a few stops along the way, the Pam Am 727 jetliner made an effortless landing at Bien Hoa Airport, Vietnam. There was no turning back now. We were already here.
In 1968, I was just out of high school, a confused black male living in a world that was coming apart at the seams. Many bizarre historical events happened in my young lifetime, such as my witnessing firsthand the Watts riot, surviving the fears of the Cuban missile crisis, the constant threat of nuclear war, and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. I began to embrace the conclusion that Western civilization was doomed to collapse or revert to barbarism, and we had no genuine chance of a reasonable future. Life had lost its value. Now, I had put myself in a position to engage in the most extreme episode of my life, three years of duty in the military. I had little wisdom regarding the military, or what I was doing by enlisting in the army. But I'd made up my mind, and whatever field I chose, I was going all the way no matter the outcome. I put myself into this mess, now it was up to me to make the best of it. The 250 GIs aboard the jetliner sat

quietly, waiting for the aircraft to taxi to a halt. I peered nervously outside the port window. At that moment, home seemed so far away. Vietnam is about as far from home as an American can be while still on earth. Before I had enlisted in the army, I had never taken a trip outside the state of California. Now I was on the other side of the world, landing in a country where I might be asked to forfeit my life. I felt totally intimidated. As I sat gazing beyond the window at the new and unfamiliar surroundings, I realized that, once outside the cabin of that airplane, whatever clumsy misconceptions I had about the country of Vietnam and the war in general would soon change. I began to silently question my basic training instructors' knowledge on the subject of Vietnam. Most of my infantry training on Vietnam had been followed by conflicting stories and rumors that were hard to swallow. I was never sure if some of the instructors in basic training, advanced airborne infantry training, and airborne jump school had ever fired a bullet in anger. Or if any of them had ever made the trip to the land tagged as "hell on earth." The instructors who wore the CIB (Combat Infantry Badge) with a star over the top, well, you just knew to listen to them. For those with none at all, I had a raised eyebrow. One story that continued to persist, and at the same time that I continued to reject, was the rumor that the enemy didn't go down after getting hit by bullets. The reports claimed that the enemy were so doped up on drugs that they didn't respond to getting shot. Yeah, right . . . How could I tell who was telling the truth and who wasn't? I couldn't help but question whether or not I was ready to endure and survive the coming year. Would I be able to find the inner strength and fortitude? Like most other kids growing up as a "baby boomer" during the John Wayne World War II movie era, I would romanticize what it would be like to fight and survive a war. It was my childish thirst for adventure and unyielding lust for knowledge that steered me this way in the first place. Today a person might ask, what series of events could actually lead a person to volunteer to go fight a war? Well, for me that answer would be unequivocally, "Peer pressure and pride," plain and simple! I remember a bright, sunny California Sunday afternoon. The song "Groovin' " by the Rascals played repeatedly on the old record player. My cousin Ricky Riley and I, with four of my closest friends, Gerald Burton, George Wallace, Jr., Owen Hampton (Le Le), and Lester Young, all got together to decide our future after high school. The general consensus leaned toward a three-year hitch with Uncle Sam. Ricky and Gerald wanted to serve with the U.S. Marines because of their family ties with the Corps. Le Le and Lester opted to go into the air force for their aeronautical training programs. I was wrangled into choosing a service because I had no intentions whatsoever of going into the military. But making my decision was easy. The army, airborne training, and the Special Forces schools had always piqued my interest. It really wasn't a bad deal considering I would be able to attend college on the GI Bill after completing my duty. On occasion the military would show up at our high schools on career day. They offered an appealing assortment of training programs. On the other hand, I wanted to make a run at junior college football. As fate would have it, while training to make the football team at Harbor City College that summer, I broke my leg in a scrimmage. So during the frosty winter month of November 1967, just after my leg had healed, I joined the U.S. Army under the "buddy plan" with my high school best friend, George Wallace, Jr. For obvious reasons we made quite a pair. We stuck together at a time when it wasn't easy for a black man in the Deep South to answer to a name like George Wallace, Jr. It certainly was a challenge for poor George, and for me, too. With my "tough guy" attitude, I believed I could do just about anything, and George and I really got our fill of things. We were often the subject of sometimes funny and harmless ridicule administered by the drill instructors. It made life in the military just a little more interesting. Now I would be the first to admit that it would not have gone over very well if most of my friends went off to war and I was the only one left behind. In our eclectic little circle you were either for the Vietnam War or you did something about it, like join a protest group or actively dodge the draft. I was never one who could stand on the sidelines and watch a good fight, so inevitably I joined the military to try and satisfy my passion for adventure. While the rest of the world made deep, socially conscious decisions concerning their future and the state of the nation, I traveled the paths resolved by peer pressure and superficial football injuries. Obviously, I wasn't alone in my quest. I tried to understand or even come to grips with the gravity of my decision, but I really had no idea what I was getting myself into by fighting a war. War wasn't at all what I'd expected it to be. War breeds an environment where every level of fear known to man will eventually surface. First of all, I had to dig deep and draw out the courage it would take to leave home for the first time in my life. The other part of my self-imposed journey was joining the frightening and complex world of the U.S. military. Perhaps my journey was a cry for help, an effort to prove to myself and others, like my father, my self-worth. At the tender age of eighteen and nineteen years old, a teenager's hormones are overactive. My making a potentially suicidal statement like volunteering to fight in a war was in reality my reaching out and pleading, "Please stop me before I kill myself!" It was too late now. My test of courage had me and the jetliner full of troops steadfastly on the runway awaiting instructions. The cabin inside the jetliner started to heat up. The overhead fans began blowing recirculated warm air. The now anxious and irritated cargo of GIs commenced to voice their collected opinions. Finally the door swung open, sucking out what was left of the precious "American" oxygen. The 250 passengers expressed a big sigh of relief from the stale air and heat. Soon after, the stewardess hustled us off the airplane with a courteous but repetitious "Bye bye" and "Good luck." A line of buses waited to transport the troops to the 90th Replacement Center in Long Binh. When we boarded the bus, the interior was as warm as an oven. What a contrast to eighteen hours of pure comfort in a climate-controlled jetliner. The windows inside the bus were half down and protected by a thick-gauge wire mesh screen to

prevent the enemy from throwing hand grenades into the cargo area. Me being one of the cargo, I thought it was a good idea to have such protection. The procession of buses weaved into the heavy traffic on a two-lane asphalt highway. The roads seemed well kept. Vietnam had a stench all its own, both politically and physically. The smell inside the city of Bien Hoa was like nothing I had ever experienced. The exposed sewer system that ran through the city streets gave off a damp, musty odor that made me want to puke. Bien Hoa was a small, bustling rural town with a collection of U.S. and Vietnamese military personnel serving to protect its inhabitants. The motorbikes, taxis, Lambrettas, street vendors, and military vehicles made up a hefty portion of the traffic. The "ladies of the night" had an American flair in their dress style, probably an enemy attempt to make us feel homesick. And it worked! There was no indication of a war inside the city except for the crush of military personnel roaming the streets. The city's merchants and civilians throughout the energetic marketplace seemed to go about their daily routine as if no war existed. The caravan of brown army buses came to a stop in front of the personnel processing station. The hydraulic doors swung open revealing a short, burly "leg" (nonairborne) staff sergeant who started out by announcing his name and his height, so I thought. "I am Staff Sergeant Robinson, and I am 'short'!" "No kidding," I thought, snickering to myself at his five-foot-six squatty frame. "I have only forty days left in this hellhole. Because I am so 'short,' I am in charge of you and this detail. I want you to think of me as God. Until I get on one of those big beautiful birds going home, you will obey and follow my every command!" He ordered us off the bus to stand formation. When I stepped out into the intense heat, it was truly a rude awakening from hell. The scorching sun overcame me. It must've been every bit of 120 degrees. A thick wave of heat blanketed the long road leading to the rest of the base area. I was almost certain I was in purgatory. The sweat from my body consumed my fatigues. "Oh shit!" I thought. "This fuckin' place is hot as hell and humid, too! Boy, Ed, you really screwed up this time. You and your big ideas about facing your fears and showing the world you could handle whatever life dished out. . . ." Staff Sergeant Robinson instructed us to stand at ease. "Smoke 'em if you got 'em." "What? Is he joking?" I said, complaining to the person next to me. Who in their right mind would smoke a cigarette in this heat? To light a cigarette, all you had to do was hold it up to the sun and poof, instant fire! "When you finish your smoke break," the staff sergeant continued, "field strip the cigarettes and stuff the butts into your pockets, because you are the ones who will be policing this area." It was a struggle to get adjusted to the new weather conditions. It took two full sweaty days just to learn how to breathe the thick heavy air. During my first few days at the holding center, I had to pull the unpopular details like KP and perimeter guard duty. We also had to attend mandatory formations and orientations. On the third day we were paid our military salary and issued our much valued ration cards. A large air force PX was nearby on base, and believe me when I say this, getting the ration cards was like receiving the key to the city. We were given time off and dismissed from formation to go raise hell. I joined a group of guys with a jeep headed to the PX. I bought enough goodies and supplies to keep me "in pocket" for a long while. We had no idea when we would be able to visit a military store again. For the sake of keeping track of time while pulling guard duty on the perimeter berm, I purchased a durable Casio watch with an illuminated dial. There were times when disputes surfaced in the middle of the night or early morning because the common watch that was supposed to be passed every two hours didn't make it. Some of the troops couldn't stay awake for two and four hours at a time and frequently fell asleep during their guard shift. They would then try to pass the blame and the remaining time on to you or to whomever was next in line. It was smart to have your own watch at all times.