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› M551 Sheridan: The US Army's Armored Reconnaissance / Airborne Assault Vehicle from Vietnam to Desert Storm

## Schiffer Military History M551 Sheridan

# M551 Sheridan: The US Army's Armored Reconnaissance / Airborne Assault Vehicle from Vietnam to Desert Storm

An Official Publication by Schiffer Military History

## INTRODUCTION TO THE M551 SHERIDAN MANUAL

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This manual provides a comprehensive historical overview of the M551 Sheridan, a unique armored reconnaissance and airborne assault vehicle. Often mistakenly referred to as a light tank, the M551 was engineered for specific roles, featuring a lightweight, amphibious, and air-droppable design. Its distinctive armament included a massive 152 mm gun capable of firing both conventional rounds and the MGM-51 Shillelagh antitank missile. The book details the vehicle's extensive operational history, from its deployment in the Vietnam War to its involvement in Operation Just Cause in Panama and Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. It also covers its later role in simulating Soviet Bloc vehicles at the National Training Center. Through a rich collection of archival and detailed contemporary photographs, this publication explores the Sheridan's development, service, and legacy.

LEGENDS OF WARFARE  
GROUND

# M551 Sheridan

The US Army's Armored Reconnaissance / Airborne Assault Vehicle From Vietnam to Desert Storm

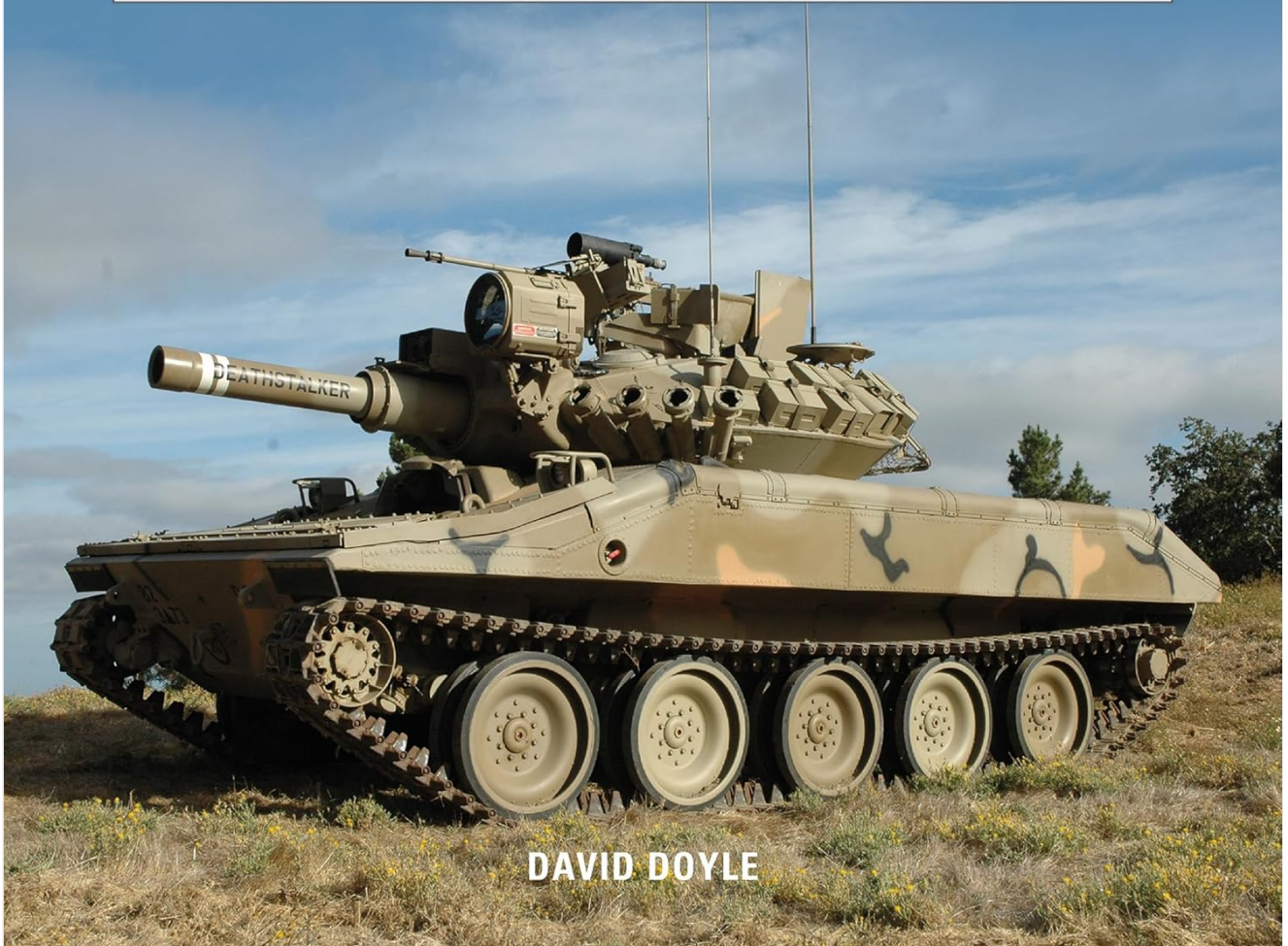


Figure 1: The official cover of the "M551 Sheridan" book, showcasing the vehicle.

## THE M551 SHERIDAN: DESIGN AND PURPOSE

The M551 Sheridan was conceived as a versatile armored vehicle, distinct from traditional light tanks. Its primary design objectives focused on reconnaissance and airborne assault capabilities, requiring a vehicle that was both agile and transportable by air.

### Key Design Features

- **Lightweight Construction:** Engineered to be significantly lighter than conventional tanks, facilitating air transport and deployment.
- **Amphibious Capability:** Designed to operate in water, allowing for diverse operational environments.
- **Air-Droppable:** A critical feature enabling rapid deployment into combat zones via parachute.
- **Unique 152 mm Gun Launcher:** The main armament was a dual-purpose system, capable of firing both standard 152 mm conventional rounds with combustible cartridge cases and the advanced MGM-51 Shillelagh antitank missile. This innovative system provided significant firepower against armored targets.

## OPERATIONAL HISTORY AND DEPLOYMENT

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The M551 Sheridan saw active service across several significant conflicts, demonstrating its adaptability and unique capabilities in various combat scenarios.

### Vietnam War

The Sheridan was extensively deployed during the Vietnam War. Its lightweight design and mobility proved advantageous in the challenging terrain, though its effectiveness and survivability in certain combat situations were subjects of ongoing evaluation.

### Operation Just Cause (Panama)

In Operation Just Cause in Panama, the M551 Sheridan participated in its only combat air drop. This demonstrated its unique airborne assault capability, allowing for rapid insertion into the operational area.

### Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm

The vehicle also saw service during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, contributing to reconnaissance and support roles in the Gulf region.

### Post-Service Role

Following its active combat career, the Sheridan continued to serve the US Army by masquerading as Soviet Bloc vehicles at the National Training Center, providing realistic opposition for training exercises.

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS OF THE PUBLICATION

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This section outlines the key specifications of the book itself, providing details about its physical attributes and publication information.

Specification	Detail
Publisher	Schiffer Military History
Publication Date	October 28, 2019
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## VISUAL DOCUMENTATION AND PUBLISHER INFORMATION

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This section provides additional visual context related to the publication and details about the publisher's commitment to military history.



*Schiffer*  
*Military History*

Schiffer Military History is dedicated to publishing definitive books on military and aviation subjects by the world's leading historians. It has operated a distinct imprint for more than thirty years and has published more than one thousand titles.

*Figure 2: Schiffer Military History's dedication to publishing definitive books on military and aviation subjects.*

## OUR AUTHORS

We partner with authors who are conducting fresh, exciting research. Schiffer Military History publishes substantive, original works on the subjects that scholars and enthusiasts are searching for.

*Figure 3: Information about Schiffer Military History's author partnerships and research focus.*



Figure 4: A selection of other titles published by Schiffer Military History.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER

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### About the Author: David Doyle

David Doyle is a prolific author with more than 100 books to his credit. In 2015, he was honored with the Bart Vanderveen Award by the international Military Vehicle Preservation Association. This prestigious award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the historic preservation of military vehicles worldwide. His extensive knowledge and dedication are evident in his detailed works, including this comprehensive study of the M551 Sheridan.

### About the Publisher: Schiffer Military History

Schiffer Military History is a distinguished imprint dedicated to publishing definitive books on military and aviation subjects. With over thirty years of operation, the publisher has released more than one thousand titles, establishing itself as a leading source for historical research and documentation. They partner with authors who conduct fresh, exciting, substantive, and original research, ensuring that their publications meet the high standards of scholars and enthusiasts alike.