

1st Cav. Division fights in three consecutive wars

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After spending nearly a quarter of a century here, the 1st Cavalry Division turned in their horses and headed for Australia to train as field artillery Soldiers for World War II.

The 1st Cav. Div., dubbed "First Team," has participated in several overseas deployments into hostile territories beginning with World War II in 1943.

The 1st Cav. Div. boarded a U.S. Navy ship headed for Australia during the summer of 1943.

During their six months in the country, they received rigorous training in combat jungle warfare and amphibious training.

To assist in the success of their missions, several units were added to the division, including a recon troop, a field artillery unit and a light tanks company.

Under the direction of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Lakota and Dakota Indians of Sioux descent were authorized for the division. These Native Americans were known as "Code Talkers" and became key players in the country's survival during World War II.

By Jan. 1944, the division began heading to New Guinea to stage for the battles that would ensue.

Their first mission was to secure the beach at a remote Japanese island

known as Los Negros. Three victorious waves were sent in, but the fourth and final wave was ambushed by the Japanese and sustained heavy casualties. The beach was finally secured in Feb. 1944 and their next mission was to capture Luzon, the main island of the Philippines, where they once again triumphed and were on to their next mission - Manila.

The 1st Cav. and the 37th Division were both tasked to race to Manila, a major Japanese territory in the Philippines. The 1st Cav. arrived first in Manila, and by March 1945, organized resistance in Manila had been eliminated.

One of the final missions of the 1st Cav. during the war was to take Tokyo, Japan. They were once again the first to arrive and on Sept. 3, 1945, for the first time in American history, Armed Forces were in the capital of "the mighty Japanese Empire."

The division remained in Japan and assisted in peacekeeping efforts until 1950, when they were called to help defend South Korea.

In Oct. 1950, the 1st Cav. was the first to arrive in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. After more than 18 months of non-stop fighting throughout Korea, First Team returned to Japan to defend Hokkaido Island. The division moved back and forth between Japan and Korea throughout most of the 1950s, defending several key areas.

On Aug. 29, 1957, U.S. ground forces, including First Team, were ordered off major Japanese islands by a treaty agreement made between Japan and the United States.

Just one month after the division left Japan and returned to Korea, General Order 89 was issued. This General Order announced the redesignation of the 24th Infantry Div. as the 1st Cav. Div.

In October 1956, the 24th ID retired its colors and command of the First Team was given to the former 24th ID commanding general, Maj. Gen. Ralph W. Zwicker.

The division's new mission was to maintain order along Korea's de-militarized zone. After nearly a decade in Korea, the division was reorganized as the 1st Cav. (Airmobile) and was made up of special elements of the 2nd Inf. Div. and the 11th Air Assault Div. and the 10th Air Transport Div.

The troopers of the former 1st Cav. stayed in Korea with their equipment and became part of the 2nd ID. Their mission was to continue to maintain order at the DMZ where they are still stationed today.

The 1st Cav. (Airmobile) was moved to Fort Benning, Ga., for their reorganization and by late July 1965, they were headed to Vietnam as the first fully committed division of the war.

The 16,000 troopers assigned to the 1st Cav. (Airmobile) traveled to

Vietnam by sea and air. Vietnam would mark the third consecutive war for First Team, the longest tour in combat history. While there, they received the first presidential unit citation in Nov. 1965 for destroying two regiments of a North Vietnamese division during the Pleiku Campaign. That defeat marked the first major blow to the North Vietnamese forces.

The 1st Cav. (Airmobile) participated in numerous missions during Vietnam. Some of them included Operations Masher, White Wing, Crazy Horse, Paul Revere II, Pershing, Byrd, Thayer I, Pegasus and J.E.B. Stuart III. Operation Pershing was the longest, lasting 11 months. During that operation, they participated in 18 major battles. When it ended in Jan. 1968, the enemy had lost more than 5,400 troops and 2,400 more were captured.

On May 5, 1971, the 1st Cav. relocated its colors to Fort Hood, Texas. The 3rd Bde. stayed in Vietnam to assist in helping to stabilize the country where they remained until returning to Fort Hood in June, 1972, which meant the 1st Cav. was the first to arrive in Vietnam and the last to leave.

(This article is part III of IV on the history of the 1st Cav. Information was gathered from the 1st Cav. Div. Association website.)

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