



Tomahawk

A SHORT HISTORY
OF THE
23RD US INFANTRY REGIMENT
1812 - 2019



HA Ogden, c. 1890 reprinted in *Uniforms of the United States Army*, 1960.

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Office of the Regimental Colonel 23rd US Infantry Regiment

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Disclaimer

The proponent authority for this publication is The Office of the Regimental Colonel, 23rd US Infantry Regiment, US Army 2026. Tomahawk A short history contains only unofficial information and does not necessarily reflect the policy and views, official or otherwise, of the War Department and/or the Department of the Army. Tomahawk A short history has been researched, authored and produced entirely by Tomahawks for the life-long edification of morale enhancement of current, former and future Tommies by Lieutenant Colonel William Beaver, Editor-in-Chief and Sergeant Neil Andrews, Regimental Historian. of *We Serve*, the 23rd's biannual regiment-wide journal. Both are published historians (Stanford University and the University of Oxford) and former Tomahawks as well. Design by Andrew Aries.

The compilers apologize for the brevity of this history. Many Tomahawks deserving mention and more have, alas, been missed. Many of them can be found, however, on line at Andrews Compendium of Commanders. Go to <http://23rdinfotomahawksjournal.com/>.

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If you would like to learn more about this illustrious regiment, you can read interesting aspects of our history online or consult the *We Serve* holding in the Library of Congress.

Preface



Most American soldiers have little or no appreciation of the past history of the unit to which they are or were assigned. They and their leaders do not have the facts which would enable them to tap into or draw inspiration from the lessons learned or take pride from their unit's past accomplishments or failures. Their heritage is no more than a few faded photographs on the wall of their head shed.

At some point in your life you become connected with one of the most extraordinary infantry regiments in the entire US Army: the 'Famous Twenty-Third' as it was known for almost two centuries before we became Tomahawks.

Almost uniquely, we have fought in every American conflict around the globe since 1812: the Civil War, the settling of the west, the Philippine Insurrection, the Great War, the Second War, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and now the universal threat called the Global War on Terror. We were not only the first to circumnavigate the globe we have never stopped.

Be we active or retired, for us and our families the motto WE SERVE is a guide for how we live our lives of service above and beyond which is as real for each of us today as it was for our predecessors down through the ages. It is this spirit which our monument at Fort Benning, Georgia, where we all trained, seeks to capture, dedicated as it is to those Tommies who made WE SERVE more, much more than mere words.

Frederick Drew
Lieutenant Colonel (Retd)
Hon. Regimental Colonel
23rd US Infantry Regiment



This painting of two infantrymen and a West Point Cadet during the War of 1812, is one of a series of uniform paintings by HA Ogden (1856-1936) commissioned by the Quartermaster General at the end of the nineteenth century when America's 'French blue' uniforms gave way to uniforms of 'concealment and camouflage', ie khaki and olive drab. Ogden was the undisputed authority and artist of US Army uniforms of the period. How soldiers kept their white 'full pantaloons' clean remains a mystery.

The Early Years

As the expression goes, we were ‘Stood Up’ by an Act of Congress on 26 June 1812; one of twenty-five new regiments of foot authorized by a panic-stricken Congress fearful that in some unspecified way Great Britain would attempt to regain control of the new republic and its commerce.

With a mind-set against the idea of standing armies, the infant nation faced the coming conflict with virtually no arms and not much of anything else. Nevertheless, recruitment began, Baron van Steuben’s drill book was dusted off and the new 23rd saw action in October 1812, the first of some fourteen engagements mostly in New England and Canada. Amongst the first fallen from our regiment in April and October 1813 were Peter Hawins and Samuel Armstrong from illness or disease. They and probably others are now interred in the Christ Church graveyard in Manalius, New York.



Courtesy of Kim Michalak, the Newell Fay Funeral Home and the Schepp family.

Overall, the War of 1812 was regarded on both sides of the Atlantic as a ‘most regrettable affair’. The White House was put to the torch, the federations of Indian tribes sided with the British and by the time the 23rd was consolidated into the 2nd Infantry along with the 6th, 16th, 22nd and 32nd Infantries on 3 March 1815, the infant United States had already turned from half-baked dreams of conquering Canada (never a good idea even then) in favor of pushing west, displacing Indian nations as it went and if force was needed, generally using locally raised militia.

With its amalgamation, the 23rd as a separate regiment quietly disappeared into a dusty drawer in the War Office for the next 46 years.

Record

Engagements

Queenston Heights, 13 October 1812; Black Rock, 28 November 1812;
Fort George, U. C., 27 May 1813; Stony Point and Sacketts Harbor, N. Y., 29 May 1813;
Stony Creek, U. C., 6 June 1813; Beaver Dams, U. C., 24 June 1813;
Out Post affair, Fort George, U. C., 24 August 1813;
La Colle Mill, Canada, 30 March 1814; Fort Erie, U. C., 3 July 1814;
Chippewa, U. C., 5 July 1814; Lundy’s Lane (Niagara Falls), 25 July 1814;
Assault on Fort Erie, U. C., 15 August 1814;
Siege of Fort Erie, U. C., August 15 to September 17, 1814;
Sortie from Fort Erie, 17 September 1814.



Here a field officer of artillery briefs an infantry officer preparing to lead his unit into the line. The light-blue-dark-blue for Federal forces was already long established by 1861 and the version illustrated by HA Ogden here remained the standard fatigue uniform for infantrymen until into the next century.

The War between the States 1861-1865

The 23rd disappeared as a unit of infantry in 1815 and its identifying number 23 slumbered in that dusty drawer in the War Office all during the long years of peace broken only by the Mexican War (1846-8). Yet at the same time underneath the surface the Union was breaking apart, primarily over the issue of slavery. Ought it to be abolished or encouraged to flourish? As the cotton-raising South was almost completely reliant on masses of cheap labor and at the same time the North was beginning to enjoy the benefits of the Industrial Revolution, the Yankees regarded slavery as wicked and morally bankrupt. Finally the political split came in 1861 ostensibly over 'states rights' which the new Confederacy vowed to support militarily.

Thus on 4 May 1861 in response to the increasing number of southern states leaving ('seceding') from the Union, Congress created the three-battalion 14th Infantry Regiment to defend Washington. It needed defending and no mistake. In the throes of a panic the citizens and politicians of the capital could hear canon fire, reminiscent of almost fifty years before, fearing an invasion which threatened but never came.

Early in the conflict, many a patriotic young man rushed to the colors and when time and recruits did allow, a second Battalion of the 14th Infantry was stood up in the spring of 1862 at Fort Trumbull, Connecticut. From then on, it, or some of its companies with the rest of the 14th Infantry, formed part of the 5th Corps which took its punishing share in some 39 battles to come month after month, in the Army of the Potomac. We know this because it is from the 2/14th that we were eventually reborn in September 1866 and its 39 battle honors became, *ipso facto*, ours!¹

This version of the forage cap, based on the French kepi, became the standard headgear for officers and men alike until the adoption of khaki uniforms at the turn of the 20th Century. Early in the Civil War it was impossible for commanders to differentiate which Federal soldiers belonged to which unit so by 1863 the addition of different symbols on the cap denoted the wearer's corps. This surviving cap shows a red maltese cross which identifies it as having belonged to a soldier in V Corps. Strong enough was the memory of our attachment to V Corps in the Civil War that the designers of our coat of arms in 1922 included it in our distinctive unit insignia.



1: The following are the 39 battles and engagements in which the whole or a part of the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry were engaged: Siege of Yorktown, Va., 4 April to 4 May 1862; Gaines Mills, Va., 27 June 1862; Malvern Hill, Va., 1 July 1862; 2d Bull Run (2d Manassas), Va., 29 and 30 August 1862; Antietam, Md., 17 September 1862; Snickers Gap, Va., 3 and 4 November 3 1862; Fredericksburg, Va., 13 December 1862; Chancellorsville, Va., 2, 3 and 4 May 1863; Gettysburg, Pa., 2 and 3 July 1863; Wilderness, Va., 5 May 1864; Laurel Hill, Va., 8 to 13, 1864; Spottsylvania, Va., 14 May 14, 1864; North Anna River, Va., 24 May 1864; Bethesda Church, Va., 1 and 3 June 1864; Petersburg, Va., 18 and 21 June 1864; Weldon R. R., Va., 19 and 21 August 1864; Chapel House, Va., 1 October 1864; Hatchers Run, Va., 27 October 1864.

Manifest Destiny



A first-rate Fighting Man, Frederick Remington, 1898

In the post-Civil War Army, twenty-six of the forty-five retained Regular regiments were posted to the south and twelve went into Indian country. The bulk of the late 2/14, now the 23rd, while not somewhere in the South protecting emancipated ex-slaves, called freemen, set sail in three vessels for the Pacific Northwest with orders to receive Alaska into the Union. For the next almost half century the 23rd would play a leading role in the settling of the west.

Indeed, with the end of the Civil War, a pent up nation of restless settlers and prospectors were obeying the philosopher Horace Greeley's clarion call to 'Go west, young man, go west' and so they did, crossing into the unknown first by wagon trains and then railways populating vast swathes of lands unsecured by 'civilized' notions of ownership. It was thought of as the new nation's God given destiny, a destiny made manifest. As they moved west they ceaselessly pestered their new politicians (called 'carpet baggers in the South) to order the US Army to support their expansion and protect them as they robbed the nomadic, native Americans of their ancestral heritage. The army did as it was told.

The 23rd in the West

The infantrymen of the 23rd in the era between 1866 and 1917 were aged between 16 and 84 (yes, really). Most were in their late 20s and came from more than a score of non-southern states and from 15 foreign countries. About a third came from Germany or Ireland. The average private stood just over 5'7" and the reason most gave for enlisting was a thirst for 'excitement, refuge, and above all steady work and sure pay.' One Commanding Officer from this era,

Colonel R Dodge, argued that country boys were better than city recruits who 'were very frequently of the 'rough and tough' element, lazy, intemperate, vicious and reckless.'

As for fitness and military skills, it is safe to assume those stationed in the west were exceptionally fit judging by their ability to 'go hiking' rain or shine, in daylight or dark in the most extreme weathers over inhospitable terrain for days on end. As one journalist wrote of a private on escort duty with a wagon train 'He was wiry, taciturn, and always had his eyes on the hills.' On these 'hikes', many of which lasted weeks and covered scores of miles, especially in winter, men directly under the command of the Regimental Colonel, George Crook (1867-1873) wore two pairs of lambs-wool socks in moccasins with cork soles, buffalo-hide boots, hair-side in. Each soldier could wear what he wished for underwear 'provided there were two layers'. Shirts had to be flannel, double breasted and coats called 'blanket-blouses' were overcoats of buffalo, bearskin or simple canvas with fur caps and collars, wool gloves and gauntlet of muskrat. As for supplies, sometimes a wagon with water and ammunition would accompany the hikers, other times, they went it alone on foot and a canteen of water, no matter how rationed, did not last long.

Many of the most reliable privates were middle age. Their home was the Army, pure and simple. For much of the period from the Civil War until 1901 that salary was about \$13 a month for new privates. From that pay the Government deducted 12¢ for the Soldiers' Home and a dollar or so a month for the post laundresses.



Note our regimental numbers on the drummer's haversack. Nicknamed 'windjammers', drummers and buglers had a repertoire of some twenty calls or beats which everyone in the unit, and their families, instantly recognized. The piping on his trousers further set him and his function in battle apart. His post was next to the commander. The Windjammer, Frederick Remington, 1897

Forts

In asserting its presence in the west, the Army's solution was to build forts all over the west, more than a hundred between 1865 and 1898. Usually miles from anywhere, forts were whole civilizations apart from the rest of the world. Some were logged, looking straight out of a John Wayne movie, others just a series of adobe buildings and stables in a straight line surrounded by sagebrush and dust. Almost all were ramshackle. Either way, the usual layout once inside the wire, so to speak, consisted of administrative offices for the commander, adjutant and sergeant major; quarters for married officers, non-commissioned officers and families; barracks for the men and single non-commissioned officers and warehouses for the quartermaster and commissary functions (which when suitably decked out in bunting and flowers became the 'town hall' for social gatherings, balls, dressage competitions, etc.) as well as the necessary stables, corrals and forge pens, a bakery, guard house, kitchen, laundry and infirmary. Some forts even had chapels.

Everyone had to learn to live alongside each other and rules written and unwritten governed life. Nowhere was this more evident than anytime a senior officer and his family arrived expecting to live in quarters appropriate to his rank. This led to 'bumping' when everyone below in rank had to move house down the pecking order to a lesser quarter no matter how hard they had worked to make their current quarter attractive and comfortable. Officers' ladies and NCO wives organized social occasions and as for the men, rudimentary libraries and sports began to appear by the 1880s but such amenities found it hard to compete with wicked diversion outside involving drink and 'wild, wild wemmen'. Those temptations often led to minor charges inside, eg loss of pay, incarceration in the Guard House or tending to the fort's vegetable patches, a less than onerous punishment much encouraged by the post surgeon to augment a meat-heavy ration and prevent scurvy.

Post commanders rotated frequently but no matter who was CO, the adjutant and sergeant major were his administrative voice. The fort's Surgeon and his Hospital Steward worked from the infirmary. Each company was supposed to have a captain and two lieutenants, but rarely did. Unless married, sergeants and corporals lived in the barracks as did most specialist trades, viz, the blacksmith, farrier, saddler, wagoner and wheelwright. And over and around it all, the post bugler blew the appropriate calls that regulated the routine of the military community. In this tedium, the evening retreat parade meant a turnout of everyone changing into blues followed by evening mess and bed. Above all, life on a fort was an existence of routine and dust.

Proper Soldiering

In the west, operations consisted mainly of escorting wagon trains or trying to marshal tribal movements which occasionally resulted in full blown campaigns

against tribes resisting allocation to a reservation. Such 'hiking' provided all the excitement and exercise anyone would want. After resisting, some tribes were bent to breaking point, like the Utes of the Great Basior and the Nez Perce tribe of Idaho. But the Sioux of the Northern Plains and the Apaches of the Southwest waged the most aggressive warfare against the 23rd.

As for the Regiment's leadership in the west, our senior officers were tough cookies.¹ Few, however, led such full-on lives as George Crook, the Regimental Commander in 1868-73. In his day he was more popular with his men and the magazine reading public than George Armstrong Custer and, ultimately, much more successful. He was also a ferocious advocate of what later generations would call 'Indian rights'.

Almost certainly unique in the annals of US military history, Crook (who almost flunked out of West Point in 1852) was engaged in continuous operations *for thirty-four years* until he retired in 1886. His first assignment before the Civil War was against the Indians of the Pacific Northwest where he was fearless, not to say stoic. After one engagement in which he was wounded in the leg, he wrote '...when I jerked the arrow out, the head remained in my leg, where it remains still.' With the Civil War came Crook's first acquaintance with the formality of European-style warfare and he excelled at it, climbing rapidly through the ranks distinguishing himself and receiving brevets for his valor. He was even briefly captured. He ended the war a major general commanding a division of cavalry.

Shorn of his temporary rank (brevet) with the coming of peace, Crook led the 23rd on frontier duty in the Pacific Northwest. Within a few months he and his command faced hostilities there and in the southwest. The first idea he put into practice was to increase dramatically the eyes and ears of the 23rd, his new command. Beefing up his scouting capability he was able to put pressure on roving Apache war parties and in 1872 took the 23rd with him to Arizona where the Apache found, for the first time, that they were over-matched 'by skillful, daring and untiring soldiers'.

Within two years most of the renegades were on reservations because his second good idea was to entrust the Indians (his scouts) to conduct negotiations with other Indians. Thirdly, the Indians moved around light, so he and his detachments moved around lightly, too. Perhaps too lightly. In his first winter with the 23rd, on the trail of the Piute and Shoshone in Oregon, the hostiles succeeded in stampeding Crook's entire compliment of pack horses and mules and the 'ragged, hardy' soldiers of the 23rd had to walk *400 miles* through hostile territory without getting massacred. So he hiked at night, making each march

1: *Andrew's Compendium of Commanders* at 23rdinfantomahawksjournal.com is a fascinating catalogue of biographies.

uneven in duration. 'Sometimes he would travel twice as far one day as on the preceding. The Indians were thus prevented from knowing where to attempt an ambushcade.' Crooke also pushed marching at night to prevent his troops from freezing. By ignoring bad weather and by keeping the pressure up, he wore out the Paiutes and secured their surrender.



Crook placed immense trust in his Scouts and treated them exceptionally well, even arranging for them to be properly enlisted. They repaid his trust by providing him with excellent intelligence and diplomatic services with the Apaches.

Finally, Crook treated all Indians with respect and dignity and it paid off. Many formally enlisted as scouts and for those who could turn to farming, he gave help even providing money from his own pocket. He never forgot that the Indians 'were people too.' Red Cloud, a chief of the Oglala Sioux said, 'He, at least, never lied to us. He gave us hope.' This approach earned him opprobrium from the racist politicians and his immediate senior, General Philip Sheridan, a hard-liner whom Crook accused of unnecessarily 'butting in' on negotiations or renegeing on promises. Crook

was undeterred. He spent his few final years promoting Indian rights. 'Greed and avarice on the part of whites – in other words the almighty dollar – is at the bottom of nine-tenths of all our Indian troubles.' His solution was as straight forward as he was: 'First, take the government of the Indians out of politics; second let the laws of the Indians be the same as those of the whites; third give the Indian the ballot.'

The exceptional reputation the 23rd enjoyed for the rest of the century rested on Crook. As his biographer wrote with conviction: 'The war services of the 23rd Infantry have been unique in Army annals.' Therefore no one at the time was surprised when the 23rd was selected for pacification duties in the Philippines and Mindanao, the Vietnam of their day.

The Tally

From 1866 until the 1890s when the Regiment took possession of a 'permanent home' at Camp Travis Texas, as Fort Sam Houston was then known, detachments of the 23rd were stationed in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Texas, Washington Territory, Wyoming and

various indian territories.² No wonder the regiment was and is regarded as the outfit which truly ‘won the west’.

The 23rd in the East

Life was very much different for companies E and K, stationed at Fort Mackinac, Michigan between June 1884 and May 1890. This fort was the nation’s second National Park, an island paradise, created just a year after Yellowstone and the 23rd were the park rangers. At its maximum strength, there were some twenty officers and 115 enlisted men from the 23rd serving on the island, doing not a whole lot except being a shining romantic example of the Army to an increasing number of tourists.



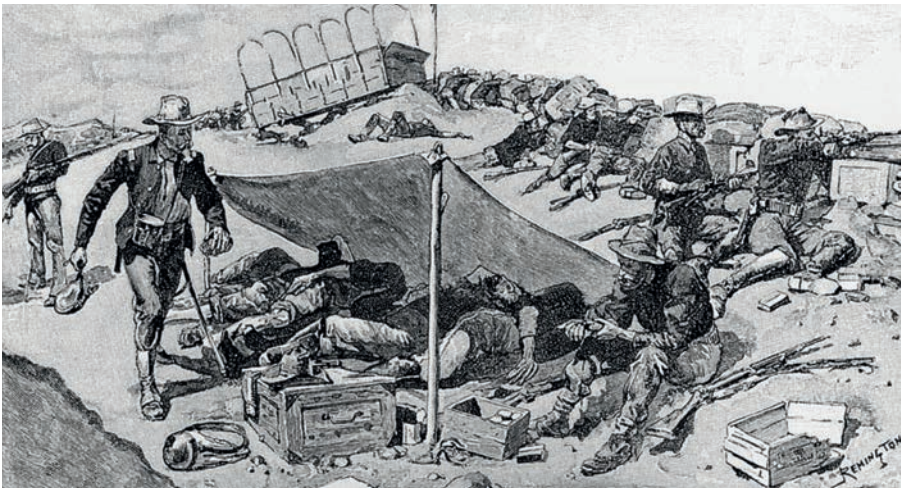
Contingent of the 23rd (and daughter) on parade at Fort Mackinac, Michigan 1885

Like the Army in the west, the commissary provided bacon and beef augmented by locally grown produce. As for quarters, all privates lived in squad bays with a rifle rack running down the middle for each infantryman’s ‘trapdoor’ Springfield rifle. Each private had a sprung bed, footlocker and hooks on the walls behind their headboards for other uniforms and civies. The single NCOs had small private rooms. At the time when the 23rd arrived, bath tubs with hot and cold running water were being installed along with flush toilets. This delighted the Medical Officer because, like his opposite number in the west, hygiene was very much a command issue. Captain Greenleaf Goodale, who spent 33 years with the Regiment, gave his soldiers, ‘most of whom were unfamiliar with this modern addition’, detailed instructions to use only ‘soft paper’ and avoid throwing matches, toothpicks and cigar stumps in the privy bowls.’ Violators, he warned, would be court martialed and made to use the old privies.

2: Early Indian actions included: Jordan Creek, Oreg., February 23, ‘66; Owyhee Cañon, Idaho, May 27, ‘66; Battle Creek, Idaho, July 6, ‘66; Near Camp C. F. Smith, Oreg., November 1, ‘66; South Fork Malheur River, Oreg., July 15, ‘67; Infernal Caverns, California, September 25 to 27, ‘67; Dunder and Blixin Creek, Oreg., March 14, ‘68; Near Camp Three Forks, Owyhee, Idaho, April 17, ‘68; South Warner Mountains, Oreg., April 29, ‘68; Snake Cañon, Idaho, June 9 and 24, ‘68; Battle Creek, Idaho, June 24, ‘68; Juniper Cañon, Idaho, July, ‘68; Little Salmon River, Idaho, July 22, ‘68; Near Camp Three Forks, Owyhee, Idaho, July 24 to August 2, ‘68; Juniper Mountains, Idaho, August 8 to September, ‘68; Red Rock Mountains, Arizona, December 11, ‘72; Mazatzal Mountains, Arizona, December 13, ‘72; Mazatzal Mountains, Arizona, May 9 and 26, ‘74; Tonto Basin, Arizona, February and March, P 73; Head of Cave Creek, Arizona, March and April, ‘73; Grace Creek, Nebraska, April 28, ‘76

Although you could not enlist if you were married, there was no restriction after you had signed up as long as you obtained permission from the CO. Marriages in the west were rare, but at Fort Mackinac its presentable soldiers were popular with pretty young holidaymakers and the hotel chambermaids so marriages were frequent.³

And in lieu of pay rises which Congress refused to award, the Army and Army charities began to address soldiers' welfare. By the mid-1880s Fort Mackinac boasted a post library, schooling in the evening, baseball, theatricals and a rifle club, all providing alternatives to going off post. Other reforms included the introduction of less onerous summary courts martial, efficiency reports and a chance to buy yourself out after a couple of years, all of which made enlistment more palatable. Desertions fell dramatically.



Remington's 'An infantry escort under attack.' The unseen Indians in this scene had no intention of hit and run but fortunately the troops had a bit of high ground and enough ammunition to make a stand.

3: For a very worthwhile and readable account of the 23rd and other regiments which served at Fort Mackinac, obtain a copy of Phil Porter's *A Desirable Station: Soldier Life at Fort Mackinac, 1867-1895* from ABE, Amazon or the shop at the Fort.

Imperial America

At the end of the nineteenth century, the United States really did stretch from shore to shore and it revelled in it. More than that, it was a time of unparalleled change. Along with some advances in suffrage for women and some black Americans, change in the matter of only a few years was most apparent in increasingly efficiency, viz coast-to-coast railways, the advent of the robust bicycle, tarmacadam, barbed wire, the truck and from 1903 the aeroplane. Then there were new medicines, new manufacturing techniques, safe food in tinned cans and, above all, electricity and the telegraph.

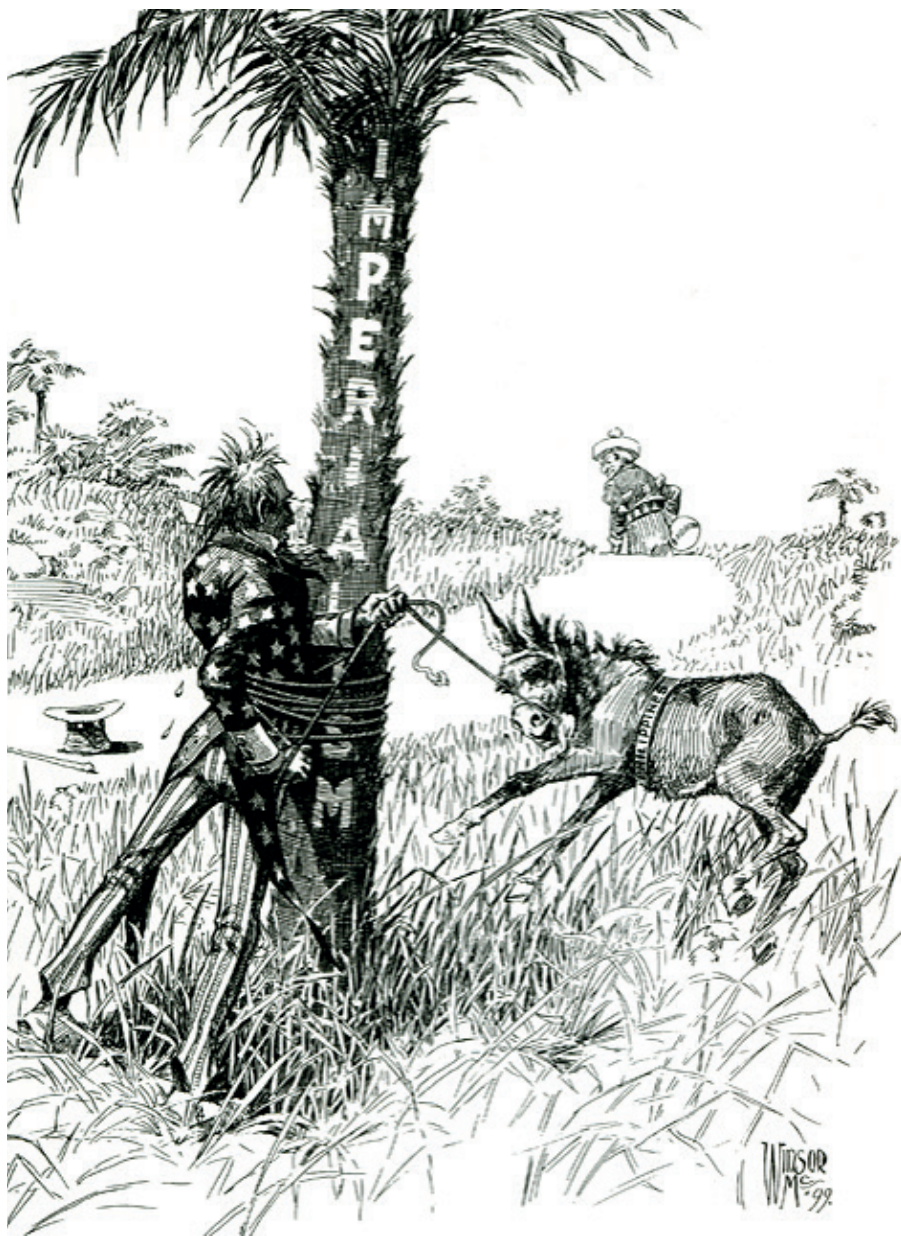
The mini-depressions of the late 1800s were forgotten as prosperity at an unheard of pace was creating a civilization the rest of the world would envy, an emerging powerhouse fuelled by an eager immigration of the people who had suffered enough whence they came to value beyond price this new world of which they were now a contributing part.

But suddenly, in 1898, self-absorbed America became involved with its first overseas venture when the USS *Maine*, a second-class battleship sent to Havana in January to protect American interests during the long-standing revolt of the Cubans against the Spanish government, was blown up by who knows who on the evening of 15 February 1898.

This ushered in the 'small war' to free Cuba from the Spanish. It was the first major action for the US Army since 1865. Yet with victory came new responsibilities for governing Cuba and the Philippines Islands. And as America's first non-continental acquisition, opinion in the US was sharply divided: should America fulfil its 'manifest destiny' (now to be called 'benign assimilation') as a civilizing colonial power or reluctantly, grudgingly administer these newly won islands in an off-handed way until stability was achieved and then leave?

Either way, US troops were needed to fill the vacuum left by the departing Spanish and the 23rd was in the game from the start. As one contributor to the *Journal of the Military Services Institution* wrote: 'Today our soldier, the war maker, has become also a peace maker and peace preserver.'

On 18 April 1898 Company G walked, yes walked with NO support vehicles 80 miles across the sandy prairie from Camp Travis, Texas to the nearest railhead. They then sailed from New Orleans around South America to San Francisco arriving a month and a week later. G Company then joined other 23rd units (D, E, F and M) to set sail in June for the Philippines. Companies A, I, and K were not far behind. To those soldiers in the 23rd whose careers had been primarily in the Indian territories or who had been at Fort Mackinac, Michigan, that 'desirable station', the sudden deployment outside of the US, the endless sea voyage, the damp heat, disease-infested jungles and unpredictable insurgents must have been a very rude awakening indeed.



As the smirking Spaniard departs, Uncle Sam getting
hogtied to the Philippines.
A contemporary political cartoon (c. 1899) illustrating the dilemma America faced.

On landing, the 23rd found the Filipinos feeling betrayed by ‘the land of the Free’. Instead of gaining independence from Spain, ‘they were simply trading one colonial power for another’. In Manila, tempers flared and on 4 February 1899 a three year war began between the Filipinos and the Yanquis. Even though almost half of the Philippines remained peaceful, the other half had distinctly bellicose ideas. The 23rd was there from the start of the fighting first on Luzon (Manila and surrounding jungles,) and later south into Moroland (Mindanao, Jolo, and surrounding islands). This time is reflected on the sea lion on our coat of arms, taken from the arms of Manila itself.¹

As our Regimental Historian, Sergeant Neil Andrews, wrote ‘It was not a pretty war. ‘Guerrilla warfare was the mode and awful atrocities were committed on both sides. One of our Regimental Colonels of the period (Colonel Glenn of Glenn’s Highway, Alaska) was court marshalled for employing water torture. It really was America’s first Vietnam, ‘the war no one has ever heard about’ yet some 4,300 American soldiers died, mostly from disease.

By 1902-3, the insurgents were largely overwhelmed, the pacification program was beginning to work and the insurrection finally petered out. After three years of ‘isolated arduous service’ the 23rd was sent back to the US via the Suez Canal, hence the globe on our coat of arms with the two troop ships circumnavigating America’s new responsibilities. And a year later the 23rd was sent back for another tour! Hence the 1920’s heraldic joke on our coat of arms with the 23rd troop ships ceaselessly plying the waves to and from America’s new responsibility.

But *who* were we?

The official Army history of the period admitted ‘the enlisted man of that era, with few exceptions, was not the cream of the crop of our citizenry.’ And no wonder. The pay was still \$13 a month and it was only increased by two bucks in 1905. With the exception of the few months of the Spanish American War or the odd industrial strike, very few Americans had ever seen a Regular US soldier or National Guardsman. Indeed, the largest body of US troops in anyone’s fast fading memory was at the Grand Review in May 1865 to celebrate the victory over the Confederate States.

Discrimination against soldiers was rife. Many states denied soldiers the right to drink in hostleries if in uniform or even vote. Soldiers were often lumped together with ‘idiots, paupers, Indians and sailors’ so no wonder at no point before 1916 did recruitment ever match the size authorized by Congress.

1: In a Royal Decree by King Philip II of Spain dated 20 March 1596, the City of Manila was granted its own coat of arms. Part of the blazon, which defines the design reads: “...a shield which in the lower half on a blue field a half lion and half dolphin of silver, armed and langued gules—that is to say, with red nails and tongue. The said sealion shall hold in his paw a sword with guard and hilt...” Their sealion and ours is derived from the arms of Castile and León.

In America's rush to modernity, the Army was left behind. As always, the Army and its expenditure was severely hamstrung by Congress. Issue boots were the despair of troops and Army doctors alike and upon arrival in Cuba in 1898, US soldiers found themselves facing Spanish forces equipped with Mausers superior in every respect to the 1892 Krag-Jorgensen, using a box magazine that could be fully charged by a clip and which fired higher velocity ammunition with smokeless powder.

Marksmanship, the emphasis of a post-Battle of the Little Big Horn reform, was a pastime popular with troops yet the average allowance of practice ammunition was still three rounds per soldier per month.

But that was not all. The concept of supporting arms and services in support of the infantry was in its infancy. The nascent air arm, part of the Signal Corps, had but 54 aeroplanes of which 51 could not fly. And the first major fleet of 27 trucks were not purchased until 1916 and that only because the Mexican government denied Brigadier General John J Pershing the use of the *Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México* to keep his expeditionary force against Pancho Villa supplied.

Now it was the first decade of the new century and only six years before the world erupted into global war.



Manning a redoubt on the edge of a jungle in Moroland, complete with unorthodox firing position with Krag-Jorgensens.

Meanwhile in Washington

However it appeared on the ground, there was some energetic thinking on higher and wider scales by reformers like Elihu Root, Teddy Roosevelt's Secretary of State for War (1899-1904). A brilliant lawyer, Root discovered and dusted off the only manuscript copy of Brigadier General Emery Upton's, *Military Policy of the US* (posthumously published as late as 1904). To Root it was the wisdom of Polonius. Using it as his stick, he pushed and pulled the Army into thinking like a modern army in just five short years. In 1903, the same year that Britain finally created a general staff after years of inaction, Root did so for his fellow countrymen in just a few months, both based on the *Großdienstab* model of the Prussian Army, (c.1870) thereby fostering, albeit unintentionally, ease of interoperability with the British Imperial General Staff when the US finally crossed the pond.

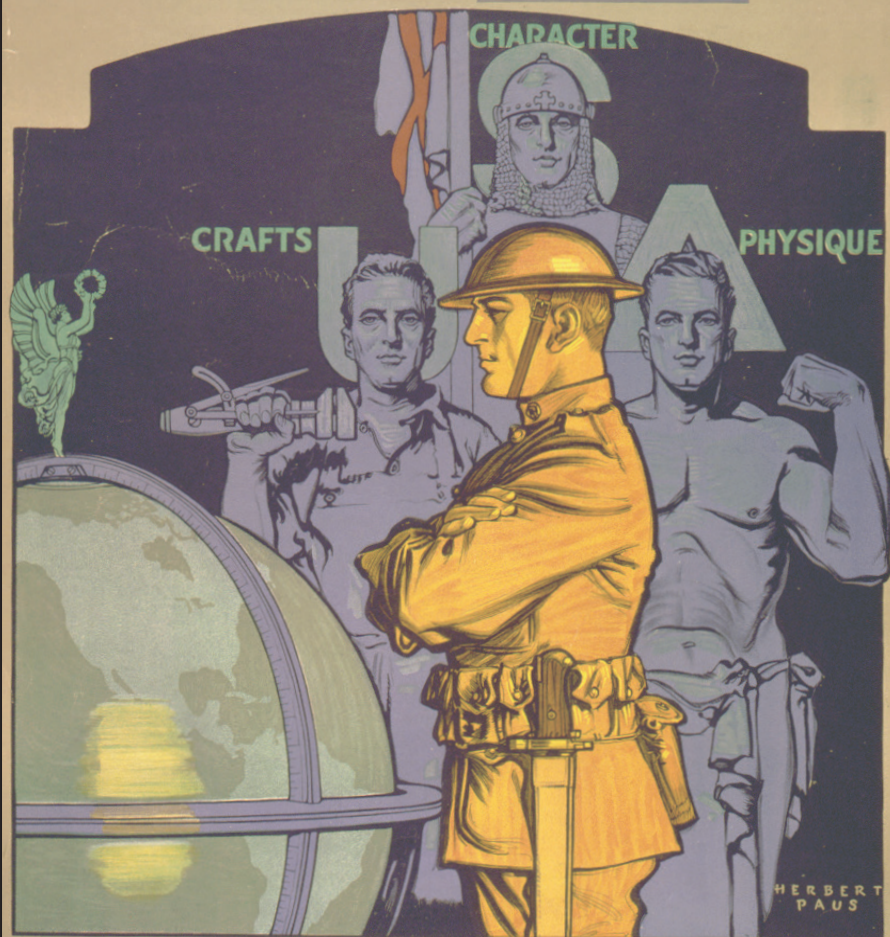
Root established much needed new procedures for promotion, founded the War College (1900) and the Command & General Staff College a year later. He enlarged West Point, encouraged professional journals and strengthened control over the National Guard. Yet he was most concerned with underpinning an interrelated world with law for which he was awarded a Nobel Prize.

Root also restored efficiency and morale in his own department but it took time. In 1910, General Leonard Wood, a surgeon who had been Teddy Roosevelt's commander at the Battle of San Juan Hill, became the Army's new Chief of Staff and upon appointment paid a call on General Fred Ainsworth, the Adjutant General and the Old School personified who loathed change. Ainsworth greeted Wood with 'When I have anything to discuss with you, General, I will be glad to send for you.' And, quick as a flash Wood retorted 'And I, General, whenever I have orders to give you, will as gladly send for you!' Henry Stimson, Roosevelt's new Secretary of War, put up with Ainsworth's increasing insubordination until in 1912, when after continued clashes with Wood and Stimson, Ainsworth resigned rather than face a court martial.

Record

Campaign Participation Credit
Manila; Malolos; Mindinao; Jolo 1903

The **United States Army** *builds* **MEN**



APPLY NEAREST RECRUITING OFFICE

Posters, like 'Uncle Sam wants you' and 'If I were a man...' played a huge part in urging the nation to enlist, grow vegetables, donate to charities, funding drives, etc. A few were daringly modern, such as the Herbert Paus poster of 1918 which addressed several themes such as strength, global responsibility and reach and, above all, aspiration, envy and duty, ie, several messages in one colorful 2x4 piece of paper.

The Great War: The war to end all wars

The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina in August 1914 no doubt affected the 23rd Infantry, now largely at Camp Travis, Texas, not one whit. If war engulfed Europe so completely from August 1914, the United States remained neutral, still innocently prospering in peace while millions were being slaughtered. As the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, put it, the US ‘presented the spectacle of the most powerful industrial nation in the world sitting on the sidelines.’ Woodrow Wilson was elected President in 1916 on the slogan ‘He Kept Us Out of War’ and the public endorsed it. In any case we had only a very small constabulary Army at best.

That neutrality evaporated in Spring 1917 when the Germans began a campaign to sink shipping bound for Britain and France including more and more US vessels. Wilson and the public were now for war against Germany and its allies and the US went at it hammer and tongs, mobilizing the industrial base and population alike.

Thanks to the reforms wrought by Secretary of State Elihu Root, the Army’s thinking was fit for scaling up. Training camps sprang up all over the US, conscription was initiated and the nascent General Staff began planning the shape and leadership for a New Army of two million men set to arrive in France by mid-1919 in arrayed in vast hitherto unheard of formations with names never heard before like: ‘battalion’ and ‘division’.

But what of the 23rd Infantry? Organisation for combat was by a drill book that had never heard of squads or platoons but could face forward in fours. So, like the rest of the Regular Army we too, sailed for France arriving in September 1917 ignorant of the horrors of trench warfare, large clusters of machine guns, rolling artillery barrages or commands by telephone. As part of the newly formed 2nd US Division the 23rd underwent intensive training near St Thiebault where their eyes were opened. They then occupied a relatively quiet subsector near Rangieres until in May 1918 when the Germans mounted a huge thrust towards Paris. When it reached 40km from the capital’s *banlieue* Marshal Foch rushed elements of the US 2nd Division up the strategic Paris-Metz Road to meet it. At the tip of the spear was the 23rd.

If there was ever trial by fire, this was it. As Sergeant Bernard J McCrossen recalled: ‘Eventually we got off (from the rear, 1900, 31 May 1918) and started our long and tedious hike [to the front]. We shall remember that night and that march for years to come. The road was jammed with transportation—column after column we passed. Town after town we passed through. No one knew what their names were. All we knew was that we were headed toward Meaux, wherever in Hell that was. In the distance we could see flashes of exploding bombs dropped by hostile

avions and occasional fires resulting from them, so that the sky would be lit up with the reflection. On we went. We saw the moon rise and set. As daylight came we saw what a funny looking bunch we were, white with dust from head to foot.... The feet of many of the men were beginning to blister and others were beginning to tire; but no one fell out, all had the determination to stick and see the show. All in all we covered 84 km in 17 hours straight, that was about fifty miles uninterrupted marching with only two hours rest and only a boiled potato, a piece of bacon and coffee to eat.'

Corporal Frank W Anderson, M Co. : 'In the morning we were wakened by a loud voice calling 'Wake up, men, we have work to do today.' I sat up and saw our own regimental commander, Colonel Malone¹, walking through the field, calling us to arms....' [He] seemed to be everywhere; he bawled out several of our boys for not having their gas masks at the alert and not having their bayonets fixed on their rifles....'

Soon they were in action as Lieutenant Martin H Taylor wrote on 8 June 1918: 'We established a little cemetery ...made some crude railings about the graves and placed a large rustic cross in the center. A tiny cross on each grave bearing the identification disc of the soldier sleeping beneath completed the arrangement. The pioneers assigned to the battalion would dig the graves during the day [under shelling] and as soon as darkness fell we would hasten across the open area [no man's land] get our burden and hurry them back to the shelter of the woods. After lowering the body into the grave... the Chaplain would come and repeat the simple service; the grave would be filled, the cross placed and another patriot had paid the price.'

Lieutenant Taylor describes going over the top. 'From somewhere Colonel Malone appeared and with a quick gesture pointed out the way; he was talking volubly but we could not hear his voice above the terrific din [of shells, whistles]. The 23rd went over in a battalion front, the 2nd Battalion leading supported by the 1st and 2nd in successive waves.... It was stupendous the number of prisoners and amount of material we captured in the aggregate.... Water was the greatest necessity... our thirst was enormous. We stripped our own dead and all the German dead of their canteens.'

'As we lay in the shallow little holes we had dug, there suddenly appeared a group of enemy planes so low we could plainly see the aviators and the black maltese crosses on the wings.... Only one man was hit near me and great was our delight when a lucky rifle shot tumbled one of the vultures to the ground.'

1: See Andrew's *Compendium of Commanders*, 23infmohawksjournal.com. Colonel Paul Malone became regimental colonel at the battle of Belleau Wood in June. Immensely popular, he was not only a distinguished commanding officer (holding a US Distinguished Service Crosses and numerous French decorations) but was largely responsible for 'standing up' the US Army Infantry School at Fort Benning.



This is probably one of the most famous photographs of WWI, featuring the 23rd attacking a German position in Belleau Wood, June 1918. The small artillery piece is a French 37mm one-shot cannon, called a 'One Pounder' especially effective against machine gun nests.

Recounting the next 48 hour forced march up to the line: 'It was all I could do to stay awake. Finally I took a heavy strap I had in my musette bag and running it through my belt I looped the strap over the handle of the field kitchen [the horse-drawn kitchen he was marching next to] and permitted myself to be dragged along more asleep than awake...'

On the 23rd went, mile after mile, battle after battle, shelling after shelling. Such was its reputation that the 23rd became the Division's shock troops, attacking the St Mihiel salient on 12 September. The Germans were driven from the ground held for four years, the Division taking objectives in one day, two and three days ahead of schedule.

And more was yet to come. This was the Meuse-Argonne offensive, as it turned out, the final push of the war, launched on 4 October 1918 to Blanc Mont (the white bulge in our coat of arms) between 2 and 7 October. In that action, too, the 23rd was solid. Scores of 23rd infantrymen were decorated by the French and, belatedly, the Americans, eg, *Oak leaf in lieu of second Distinguished Service Cross* 'During the attack on Blanc Mont, Sergeant Bogan, without aid, captured three machine-gun nests, and, after being wounded, took thirty prisoners. He himself escorted these prisoners to the rear rather than have the line weakened by taking men for this duty.'

The regiment's unstinting advance was crucial in opening the way through Rheims into the Argonne Forest. By 10 October the 23rd thought it was being finally relieved being 'shot up, depleted, exhausted' but instead they were ordered back on line. 'As we were on our way back we passed through the 78th Division who were lined up on both sides of the road to see the 'Famous 23rd Infantry' in review. Their band was ripping out some real rag-time for our benefit and it sure did sound good to us.'

Once on line again, the 23rd (along with the 9th Infantry) participated in one of the most astounding manoeuvres of the war. 'With German speaking soldiers leading, the regiment marched in columns of squads under cover of darkness straight through though the German lines. The leaders explained to enquiring picquets that they were being relieved. As dawn broke, the infiltrators spread out abreast, formed a line facing the rear of the German position, and the rest is history....'

Finally Blanc Mont was taken in early November and the 23rd joined in the pursuit of the Bosch into Germany. On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day, 11 November, the guns finally fell silent.

For its part in the Great War, the Regiment emerged with a stellar reputation and was cited twice². All this came at a terrible cost: 207 KIA/Died of Wounds and 1159 wounded, many grievously.

2: Members of the Regiment still have the honor of wearing the French fourragere on the very rare occasions today when service dress or blues is permitted to be worn.

Occupation duties in Germany followed until the Regiment returned to the US on 4 August 1919 in time to take part in the 2nd US Division's mammoth tickertape parade in New York. Then it was onto trains heading back to Camp Travis where it remained for another 23 years before it would again retrace its steps.

Record

Campaign Participation Credit

Aisne; Aisne-Marne; St Mihiel; Meuse-Argonne; Ile de France 1918; Lorraine 1918

Decorations

Croix de Guerre Fourragere

Croix de Guerre with Palm for Chateau Thierry; Aisne-Marne; Meuse-Argonne

Paul B Malone (USMA 1894) was probably the most well-known CO of the several colonels who commanded the 23rd during the Great War. He charged up San Juan Hill with Roosevelt, chased the rebel Emilio Aguinaldo up and down Luzon, held various posts in the Army of Cuban Pacification before becoming a professor of Chemistry at West Point. A series of evermore senior staff appointments followed and he joined Pershing as his planning G-5.



Malone then assumed command of the 23rd Infantry Regiment. At the Battle of Belleau Wood at the beginning of June, Malone and the 23rd were originally placed in the reserve, but promptly received orders to plug the gap in the lines which they successfully did.

Malone then led the 23rd Infantry in the Battle of Soissons and particularly distinguished himself on July 19. On the evening of July 18, after the regiment had suffered severe losses, he assisted in the reorganization of a battalion for the attack on Vierzy. On the morning of July 19 he made a personal reconnaissance of the front lines under heavy fire and then directed his regiment in the punishing attack. For his service during the Soissons operation, Malone was decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), the second highest decoration of the United States armed forces. Malone was also cited in Orders of the Tenth French Corps and of the French Army of the North and Northeast. He was made an Officer of the Legion of Honour by the French Government and received the Croix de Guerre 1914-1918 with two palms and one gold star.

He continued to command his regiment until August when he was promoted to command the brigade which made an eight kilometer drive (largely on foot) in the Battle of Saint-Mihiel. This led onto the Meuse-Argonne offensive and, soon, the Armistice.

After the War, reverting to his peacetime rank of lieutenant colonel, Malone was largely responsible for 'standing up' the Army Infantry School at Fort Benning and the famous FOLLOW ME! Badge was his design. He retired in 1936. He was immensely popular with 'his own Doughboys of the Famous 23rd' until his death in 1940.



The Second World War

With the cessation of occupation of Germany, the cuts in manpower and money began and the 23rd felt all of it. During the 1920s-30s, most of the decimated 23rd was still stationed at Camp Travis, part of Fort Sam Houston. As a Regular unit, the 23rd bore the brunt of experiments with the size and skill sets of company-level formations down to and including squads, within or without the new triangular division (infantry, armor and artillery). Then, suddenly, in November 1942 the 23rd was moved to Camp McCoy Wisconsin. No longer starved of training funds, the Regiment provided three full regimental training cadres for newly activated units and participated in the Army's first large-scale winter training program, including putting soldiers of the 23rd on snowshoes and skis in the midst of a vicious winter with temperatures as low as 45° below zero.

Training never ceased until 27 September 1943 when the Regiment began its deployment to Northern Ireland, arriving in Belfast on 20 October 1943 having narrowly survived the submarine-infested Northern Atlantic. Cold and damp as Northern Ireland is, nevertheless the 23rd settled in quickly, trained and toughened themselves on the Irish moors until April 1944 when they entrained to the coast of South Wales, one of the key debarkation points for OPERATION OVERLORD.



In this rare Box Brownie snapshot of the regiment in Caledon, Northern Ireland in October 1943. Local people had been asked by the Commanding Officer (Col Hurley Fuller) to take soldiers in to give them a feeling of a family home as they were homesick. Private Iris L. Bradshaw was one. 'I remember him well', said a local man. 'He said he was half Red Indian and that he came from Hondo, Texas. He smoked a pipe and played the fiddle. Tragically like many of his comrades, Iris was killed in action and I visited his grave on a cliff top overlooking Omaha Beach.

D Day Plus One

The Regiment landed on Omaha Beach near St. Laurent Sur Mer the day after D Day, 7 June 1944 (D+1) and moved inland under fire, taking considerable loss, toward St Lô the big market town in the debouche to the coast and a major road and rail hub (choke point).

With ton upon ton of supplies arriving every day 'logistic real estate' had to be found soonest and clearing Brest and the shores of Brittany became the next battle goal. The 2nd Division wheeled toward it as did several other US Divisions, all of which were composed of unbloodied infantry who obviously had little or no previous combat experience and, worst of all had no experience working together with artillery and tank forces.

It was a testing time for the 23rd. Their new AO was a flooded pastoral region of ten thousand little fields separated by ancient impenetrable bocages, ie windbreaks or hedgerows. The German defenders had dug into the hedgerows forcing the Americans to fight from field to field, hedgerow to hedgerow measuring the progress of their advance in yards and over it all a steady rain poured.



Treacherous bocages.

Protecting small pastures from the pounding winds of northern France, bocages proved impenetrable defensive bulwarks against the invading Allied forces until tank units began building their own bulldozers by welding scrap metal from German underwater fortifications into do-it-yourself fork lifts. This worked so well in uprooting bocages that General Bradley immediately requisitioned units of arc-welding equipment and welders to be flown to Normandy to make as many as possible in a very short timespan.

The results were impressive.

Regrouping and a day or two of intense training in coordinating with armor was hastily organized so that by 10 June the 23rd went into battle on Hill 192, a grassy slope reckoned to be 'the best observation point overlooking the entire St Lô valley. The Germans defended it with some sixteen thousand combat veterans from the 3rd Parachute Division who had given the incoming Americans a bloody nose when inexperienced US troops had had tried to take Hill 192 just after the D Day landings and failed, taking heavy casualties.

After a series of small engagements, Colonel Hurley Fuller, who had commanded since 1942, was replaced by Colonel Jay Loveless, an indomitable personality who then led the Regiment for the rest of the war. Hill 192 and its 'Purple Heart Draw' became famous in the ceaseless actions ahead but finally the way to St Lô and Brest, where the Regiment won its first Medal of Honor, was finally cleared at the cost of hundreds of US wounded or killed.

Pursuing Jerry

Now began the Pursuit Phase. On 1/2 August, General George Patton stopped in the VII Corps area near Avranches where the 2nd Infantry Division, including the 23rd and assorted other units were paused for a meeting with the 6th Armored Division's General Robert Grow. Patton told Grow that he had a wagered General Bernard Montgomery five pounds sterling that he, Patton, could be in Brest by Saturday night. 'Take Brest' Patton told Grow and Grow replied, 'That's all I need to hear.' Then on 6 August, loading up every vehicle he had with as many troops as he could cram in, including the 23rd, he set off on a high speed 200 mile motor march. Relatively unopposed, Grow's lead elements began arriving on 7 August at the heavily defended port fortress of Brest.

As with Hill 192, the Germans defended Brest with a parachute Division. Hitler ordered it be held for at least 90 days at any cost. The arriving Americans urged the Germans to surrender or face the full force of devastation by land, air, and sea. The Germans refused and the resulting hand to hand, yard by yard fighting continued at great cost in killed and wounded on both sides. When the surrender finally came, the German general asked Grow for his credentials. Grow pointed to American infantrymen standing near him and said: 'Those are my credentials.' For its part in this action the 23rd was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation.

The 23rd had arrived on Omaha Beach on 7 June. It was now 19 September. It had fought valiantly through the bocages, 192 and Brest. Soon all of Brittany's coast was the logistical receiving point for the next phase of the war. The Regiment, like all the other infantry units in the invading force had suffered serious casualties. Platoons ebbed and flowed with new soldiers who had never soldiered with each other. New tactics had to be learned and all in all Berlin was a long way away and winter was coming.

The Battle of the Bulge

Progress through northern France was slow but steady. By late 1944 the companies and battalions of the Famous 23rd, as we had been nicknamed since at least the First War, had burnished their reputation for tenacious all-terrain fighting. Reaching the Ardennes in early December 1944 as a bitter winter set in, the 23rd occupied the northeast corner of the Anglo-American advance just south of General Montgomery's Second Army preparing to move into the Rohr basin from the small town of Wahlersheid on 16-17 December. It would be tough but it was 'do-able'. And from there the next stop would be the Rhine itself. The Allies were invincible, or so it was thought.

Basking in their advances to date, the Allied high command had taken the opportunity of a relative lull in operations due to the worsening weather to send several exhausted divisions back to France for R&R in November and December 1944 leaving only eight US divisions weakly strung out along an 85 mile wide front facing one of the largest forests in Europe. It was a big mistake and Hitler was preparing to prove it.

The Wacht am Rhine

Without consulting any of his generals, Hitler dreamed up his own D-Day, a secret plan he called the Watch on the River Rhine or *Wacht am Rhine* to split the invading Anglo-American forces in one mighty punch arriving in Antwerp in less than a week thereby changing the course of the war. It was bold and it was to take place then, in the middle of winter. The few generals he let in on his plans all condemned it, but he was under relentless pressure from the Russians in the East and the Allies in the west and so

throughout the late autumn, he put absolutely all the resources of the Reich into preparing for this westward smash. With 28 armored and infantry divisions of mixed reliability, including a number manned by the elderly and teenagers, his motorized units augmented by 50,000 horses, he hoped to repeat his successful invasion of Poland in 1939, now but a fast-fading memory - except in his mind.

Throughout the last weeks of November and into December pre-positioning took place all along the front line facing the Allied armies. In the northeast an entire Panzer army was silently, stealthily waiting just inside the tree line opposite the 23rd. Then Hitler lit the touch paper at 0500 on 15 December with an hour-long barrage erupting all along the entire 85 mile front immediately followed by wave after wave of tanks, infantry and artillery emerging from the forests and heading west. With breath-taking alacrity the newly formed force captured several towns and roads previously held by the Americans.

The map was being redrawn hourly and what began as a small bump in the line started to become the famous bulge which grew every day as poor weather hindered allied air forces bombing and supply drops. As one exhausted American general confided to another: 'They are rolling us up and no mistake'. The question was, when and where would this bubble, this bulge, burst? In the early day it was only the 2nd Division in the northeast including the 23rd which held its own.

For the frozen American troops on the ground, literally on the frozen ground, they found it almost impossible to dig fox holes or load their eight round clips into the breeches of their M1 Garands without incurring excruciating frostbite. As the Americans retreated, they had to contend with English-speaking Germans masquerading as US Army Military Police in captured jeeps who sent them into deadly traps. Snow-filled days followed snow-filled nights and as the Yankees fell back, rumor was rife. Word quickly spread that on 17 December an entire field artillery observation battery of 113 GIs had been captured of which 87 were executed on the spot. It was true.

Like blowing up a balloon, the bulge grew larger and within it, on 22 December, the entire 101st Airborne was surrounded at Bastogne. The Germans demanded surrender but General Anthony McAuliffe famously retorted 'Surrender? Nuts!' But that was pure braggadocio. As anticipated by the German high command, their surprise thrust threw the Americans into confusion and they were right. The bulge was growing but the Germans high had not anticipated the chaos they themselves faced. The highly vaunted *Wehrmacht* supply effort fell apart in face of ad hoc decisions and snowbound terrain. Artillery units which had been due to be engaged early on were still stuck miles from the forward edge of the battle area on narrow roads in Germany and more than once someone failed to remember that horses with

caissons and cannons cannot cross over unplanked railway trestles. The lessons of pre-positioning fuel resupply as a key to the success of previous *blitzkriege* had been forgotten, too, as unit after unit of panzers simply ran out of fuel and spare parts. All too often horse-drawn bowsers fuel tankers slid off sleet covered forest trails, taking hours to unblock only for it to happen again and again. Inexperienced German units, newly bloodied, were backing up in retreat only to run into regular units trying to go forward and all the while brutal SS units roamed the battle area enforcing discipline. It was 'like dominoes' and all along the bulge time was being lost and time was the thing they had least of. Then the weather broke, and the skies were filled with allied resupply and allied fighter-bombers.



No mean feat. Generals Montgomery and Patton try to hold back Hitler's 28 division onslaught.

The 'bulge' erased

With a lifting cloud ceiling, General George Patton's Third Army was literally the 'cavalry coming over the hill' and in actions along the Maas River in mid-January made it possible for the British Second Army to link up with the hard-pressed American First and Third Armies during the third week of January 1945. In fact, the only part of the German attack that failed from the start was the northern shoulder manned by the Famous 23rd.

By 25 January, with hope and supplies restored to the Allies, the *Wacht am Rhine* was over and the frontline looked the way it did before the battle began.¹ The west-facing Wehrmacht was, as one Allied intelligence report put it, like German forces facing east was 'damn near finished'.

The 23rd and its parent division, the 2nd, drove into Germany at speed; crossing the Rhine in March. By April the 23rd was loading up in trucks and

1: The losses in the Battle of the Bulge were terrible: 19,000 US KIA, 47,500 WIA and 23,000 MIA. The British on the northern flank suffered 200 KIA, 1,400 WIA. As for the Wehrmacht, it was estimated that more than 100,000 were killed, wounded or captured, it was Hitler's last major offensive of the Second War.

half-tracks traveling at speed hundreds of miles a day until they reached the Czech border on the day the Germans surrendered, 8 May 1945.

The war in Europe was over and all eyes turned east.

Record

Campaign Participation Credit

Decorations

Medals of Honor

Presidential Unit Citations

Brest; Wirtzfeld, Belgium; Krinkelter Wald, Belgium; St Vith
Belgian Fourragere



*In the midst of frozen enemy, US infantryman trying to insert an eight-round clip into his Garand.
Note his severely frostbitten left hand.*



*'This is the 38° parallel topped by the Mighty 23rd Infantry Regiment.
The best damn Regiment in The World.'*

Korea

As the weary staff of the 2nd Infantry Division headquarters packed up to return home from Europe, a secret warning order was received from the War Office, now located in the new Pentagon. Once decoded it told the Division to be ready to participate... in the invasion of Japan! One can imagine the reception that message received. Yet soon enough Japan's surrender obviated that warning order and the Indianheads, including the 23rd, returned piecemeal to the US, largely to Fort Lewis and Fort Richardson, Alaska from which base they were tasked to conduct arctic air transportability and amphibious training.

Yet as it had after every conflict, Congress again emasculated the Army. By 1949 the Second Battalion of the three battalions of the 23rd was deactivated and in the remaining battalions a rifle company was axed too. After all, peace was restored.

But it was not to last. Communism, as a political theory of governing whole populations, or more accurately suppressing them, was having a field day and not just in those countries of eastern Europe within Russia's reach. So, too, in Asia, where Stalin's carefully crafted playbook was ready to fill post-war political vacuums, not least in China and forgotten Korea. Overseas, the US Army's reach in the far east did not even include a thought about Korea in the arc of responsibility of General Douglas MacArthur's Far East Command.



Tanks alot. Back when we had tanks (or at least one) they did not hesitate to plaster it with our arms.

The caption reads:

'FT. LEWIS, WASH: Alerted for overseas shipment, members of the 2nd Division's 23 Infantry tank company began the work of cleaning and repairing their equipment last night. (7/9). The men here are still not sure where they are going'.

Chipyong-ni

That suddenly changed on the morning of 25 June 1950 when hoards of Russian-armed and Communist-trained forces from North Korea spilled into South Korea, intent on subjugating the entire Korean peninsula. As the lead nation in the new United Nations response, the American 2nd Infantry Division was tapped for immediate deployment arriving in Pusan on 23 July.

To cut off the onslaught, General MacArthur launched a successful amphibious landing half way up the peninsula at Inchon and the 2nd Infantry Division led the 8th Army push towards the Manchurian border. It worked but only until

25-26 November when Red China entered the fray determined to complete the task of conquering the whole of Korea.

The only United Nations unit in the way of total communist victory was the 23rd Regiment along with two companies of French infantry from the *Battalion de Corée* and a small contingent of KATUSA, the Korean Augmentation forces to the United States Army. After a rocky start the leading element of the UN force found itself at a non-descript crossroads surrounded by eight hills called Chipyeong-ni. They alone stood against a (reliably) estimated 30,000 Chinese and North Korean soldiers, earnestly preparing to invade the south.

Meanwhile, MacArthur had been replaced by General Matthew ‘Scotch’ Ridgway. He had no options but to deploy the 23rd to slow any onslaught, which would allow the 8th Army and I Corps to retire and regroup in good order. Thus on the afternoon of 12 February 1951 on a wind-swept hillside in sub-zero temperatures, Colonel (later General) Paul Freeman received the following message: ‘G3 to Inspire 6. Our forces are executing a withdrawal except for us. We are to remain. By order of Scotch.’



‘First Victory’ oil painting by James Dietz (Vladimir Arts)

Freeman is said to have responded: ‘They are going to murder my regiment.’ But nevertheless he immediately began reinforcing his modest defensive perimeter among the ring of low hills overlooking Chipyeong-ni. It was just in time as with nightfall on 13 February 1951 wave after wave of attacks rained down on the defenders from fresh Chinese and North Korean forces ushering in three days of the most brutal fighting of the Korean War. Yet the 23rd and their French comrades achieved the impossible, the halting of a

Chinese counter-offensive comprising of numbers beyond belief, but no less than three or four divisions.¹ And one thing more. The odds were stacked against the defenders, the atrocious weather conditions hindered resupply and sapped the infantry's resilience. Rifle bolts froze solid onto breech blocks and could only become unstuck after the rifleman urinated on them to free the action.

Added to that, few replacements made their way to the front. Amongst them was the Regiment's recent Honorary Sergeant Major, (SFC Charles D Main, 1932-2022) a third-generation veteran of the 23rd. He recalled arriving at Chip'yong-ni on the eve of the biggest battle of the war. 'It was February 1950 and I was thrust into combat the day after I arrived. I was given a 57mm recoilless rifle and told I was a gunner! I had absolutely no training on the weapon. I had an assistant gunner who was also clueless. We had three Korean conscripts who carried the ammunition for us. On my fourth day with the Regiment before the battle of Chip'yong-ni we were withdrawing south across the border at the 38th Parallel. I was riding on a water trailer when I was hit in the mouth with shrapnel. I was sent to Japan to the orthodontist. They wanted to send me to the States for repairs to my mouth, so I went AWOL, and hitched a ride back to Korea and my unit. I was given a brand new 57 MM Recoilless Rifle and used it through the Battle of Chip'yong-ni, Operation Killer, Punch Bowl, Bloody Ridge and Heartbreak Ridge. Between then and May 1952 operations never stopped and I served in all the major battles with A Company, 23rd Regiment, the same unit as my father and grandfather until the end of the war. I was awarded the Silver Star, the Bronze Star for Valor, two Purple Hearts, the Combat Infantryman's Badge and three Presidential Unit Citations.'



Sergeant Major Main said of his coming to the 23rd: 'I had an agreement with the Army that I would stay and finish high school. The day after I graduated, I joined the Army. Before taking basic training I was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia for both airborne and ranger training but was diverted to Fort Lewis, Washington as the Army needed replacements for Korea which was heating up. I was sent to the 23rd Regiment and assigned to A Company, the same company that my dad and granddad had served in'.

'During the battle of Chip'yong-ni I was in a fox hole at the right flank of my company. Between me and the other company, there was a valley that was mined. On the second night, we were again being assaulted by several Chinese battalions, and the mines started going off in the valley to my left. The Chinese

1: In Professor Kenneth Hamburger's highly acclaimed *Leadership in the Crucible* (Texas A&M, 2003) he states 'How many units would be involved in the attack will never be known unless reliable historians can someday gain access to the Chinese Army archives; however, 'estimates range from eighteen thousand to seventy thousand enemy troops.'

were using cows ahead of their assault to set off the mines so they could get through. My platoon leader told me to fire into the valley and kill the cows, to stop the onslaught of the Chinese. I did. After that time, I was known as the "Great Cow Killer". About that time three enemy came through the valley to my fox hole, I grabbed my rifle, shot two of them and a machine gun to my right cut down the other one.'

'That was just the beginning. The attacks came and night became day. Fighting was fierce. We learned soon enough that in three days the Chinese lost about 2,000 killed and 3,000 wounded. Our casualties were 51 killed, 250 wounded and 42 missing. No one knows how many of the missing were captured, but of those who were taken alive, many were tortured and executed.'

At Chipyeong-ni the Chinese suffered their first defeat since entering the Korean War and ever since the constituent battalions of the 23rd honor this battle with an accolade, a verbal and written acknowledgement of merit, said or written with meaning. Known only to previous and current members of the Regiment, they share between them the accolade: SCOTCH REMAIN, rendered annually at ceremonies every year in late February.

After Chipyeong-ni

The Regiment and its French and Korean comrades regrouped in the field and continued to fight, being called upon to spearhead the UN forces in what would become known as Heartbreak Ridge. More than 3,700 US (a large proportion from the 23rd/French force) holding off an estimated 25,000 North Koreans and Chinese. The fighting here was as savage as at Chipyeong-ni and the ridge changed hands many times. Again, casualties were high. All in all, it was an ill-advised action and as one historian wrote: '...the 23rd as a whole was fairly well shattered.'

Yet again the 23rd remained steadfast and in the succeeding months fought up to the 38th parallel between North and South Korea only stopping with the Armistice on 27 July 1953, having participated in no less than ten campaigns, winning three US Presidential Unit Citations: (Twin Tunnels, Chipyeong-ni and Hongchon) and three Korean Presidential Unit Citations (Nankong River Line, Korea 50-53, 52-53). This was an unequalled tally and burnished the Regiment's reputation even brighter. General Matthew B. Ridgway in his official report to a Joint Session of Congress said of this action: "These American fighting men with their French comrades in arms measured up in every way to the battle conduct of the finest troops America or France has produced throughout their national existence."

The veterans returned to the US with relief, but it was not long to last.

Record

Campaign Participation

UN Defensive, UN Offensive, CCF Intervention, First UN Counteroffensive, CCF Spring Offensive, UN Summer-Fall Offensive, Second Korean Winter, Korea Summer Offensive 1953.

Decorations

Presidential Unit Citation TWIN TUNNELS; Chipyeong-ni; HONGCOHON





This is an illustration of a seriously STRAC soldier gracing the cover of PS Monthly wearing his starched stateside fatigues in Vietnam. Note creased trousers. The other illustration features S/Sgt Connie Rodd before some representatives in Congress complained she was too voluptuous, where upon she was redrawn and made a civilian. The artist for PS Monthly was Warrant Officer Will Eisner, the undisputed doyen of post-war American cartoonists.

The STRAC years

During the fifteen years from Korea (1953) to mass redeployment for active service in Vietnam (1967) the Army appeared to be settling back into being the new 'old Army' and welcome it was, too. But little of this was of interest to most serving soldiers, a large proportion of whom were conscripted, ie drafted, from the communities they grew up in. As newly Enlisted Grade Ones several hundred thousand late teens earned \$99.37 a month in exchange for being cold, tired, muddy and shouted at 24-7.

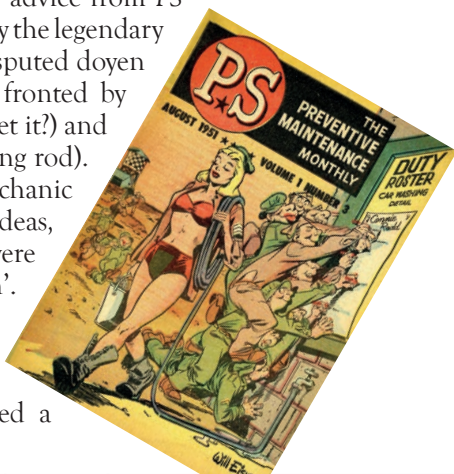
Once in Basic Training the soon-to-be Tomahawks of that era quickly learned that their personal goal was to tick off the days until their release, avoiding anything which would bring them to the notice of their platoon sergeant, a mean-mother who had a hefty range of tasks to saddle you with, not least guard mount and KP (Kitchen Police, cleaning out grease traps, peeling potatoes and the rest). After Basic the smartest way to avoid anything like an extra duty was by becoming 'seriously STRAC'. STRAC stood for Strategic Army Corps, an ever-ready, a two infantry and two airborne divisions ready to be the world's policemen, stationed in the continental United States. To be assigned to a STRAC division was to be assigned to the tip of the nation's spear.

And soon enough STRAC became slang for 'a well-organized, squared away soldier in a starched uniform, polished brass and spit-shined Corcoran boots—a proud, competent trooper who could be depended on for good performance in any circumstance which was to say: 'ready; mind clear, organized, and ready for action. S: skilled T: tough R: ready A: around the C: clock—STRAC.'

A soldier of that era would have worn Class A (Greens or Khakis) more often than service dress is worn today and fatigues were never worn off post except to go to married quarters - if available - and you certainly wore khakis or greens in public when traveling on a train, bus or by air. Going to chapel on Sunday? The uniform for officers and senior NCOs at Fort Benning, the Ranger School, and on most 'proper' posts like Fort Riley was Blues. It somehow completed the 'whole Army circle.

STRAC or not, Tomahawks of that era would have been increasingly aware that the whole Army was beginning to rotate around the need to accurately assess combat readiness after embarrassing equipment and manpower failures discovered when the Army tried to mobilize forces to meet the Cuban Missile and Berlin Crises. Indeed, maintenance and mobility issues completely consumed the infantry's thinking during this era as the increasingly independent infantry battalions realized that they and they alone would have to provide much of their own transport. And so it was that vehicle maintenance became a daily command issue of the highest importance.

Many a battalion staff officer and NCO of that period thought that they were basically running a used car lot. And if you had anything to do with vehicles you would certainly be familiar with Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara's new go-no go code *Red/Amber/Green* readiness tests for combat vehicles. Every motor pool got to know the helpful monthly advice from *PS Preventive Maintenance Monthly*, drawn by the legendary Warrant Officer Will Eisner, the undisputed doyen of comic artists then as now. It was fronted by Master Sergeant Halfass McCannick (get it?) and Staff Sergeant Connie Rodd (connecting rod). So unless you were an overworked mechanic pouring over *PS Monthly* for tips and ideas, afternoons for most Echo Mikes were given over to sport or 'personal admin'. Happy hour in the Enlisted, Sergeants' or Officers' messes on Fridays began after the lowering of the garrison standard at 1630 and invariably lasted a great deal longer than an hour.





THE ARMY HAS PUT TOGETHER A REAL GOOD SYSTEM FOR SUPPLYING REPAIR PARTS AND OTHER ITEMS YOU NEED FOR MAINTENANCE.

Thousands of people, tremendous warehouses, fast transportation, and the most modern data processing machines are "at-the-ready" for the word from the man in your unit who needs a part to put your fighting equipment back in operation.

But quite often the system never gets the word. Your man, Scrounger Sam, has a "system" that "beats the system."

LASO THAT

He hops in a ¼-ton and rides over to the 2nd of the 13th and gets the part he needs from his old buddy. He puts it on, and the equipment is back in operation. Wonderful, he thinks.

Nope. Neither Sam nor his buddy in the 13th bothered to put in a supply request. The supply system (all those people, machines, etc.) does not find out that this particular repair part is in demand, so it goes merrily on its way and doesn't worry about that part. This happens all around the Army on hundreds, even thousands, of items.

SCROUNGER

Now, maybe the next time Sam or his friend needs the item, it's nowhere. You can guess the rest: The equipment stands deadlined while priority requisitions go back all the way; parts may have to be manufactured.

If you've got a "Scrounger Sam" in your outfit, lasso him before he rides out to scrounge up repair parts and supplies. While you've got him lassoed, make him fill out a supply request for every item he needs.

Gently remind him to order, not scrounge.

Meanwhile, in the bowels of the Pentagon, Leavenworth and at Fort Benning, Georgia, cadres of bright young-ish officers began reinventing the way America would fight and this led to several reorganizations, called ROADs or Reorganization Objectives Army Divisions as well as the testing of airmobile operations at Fort Benning and arctic warfare at the Arctic Command at Fort Richardson, Alaska.

This affected the 23rd in two ways. First of all, these reorganizations spelled the end of the regiment as a fighting formation. During the late 1950s evolving combat doctrine singled out regiments as too big and inflexible. Multi-functional battle groups became the large force tactical combat unit and the regiment, as the cornerstone of the Army, parent and home for the GI, was on the point of extinction. Even the word 'regiment' and its history were thought by many at the Pentagon to be old-fashioned. By the late 1950s the word began to disappear from organizational titles and no longer were lieutenant colonels able to hanker to become regimental colonels.

Yet almost as soon as this was occurring, the Army realized it was short-sighted and the regiment as a formation, dormant or not, was not allowed to die as wiser heads fought to preserve the romance and historic value via the Combat Arms Regimental System which came into being in January 1957. Designed to perpetuate a unit's history and tradition no matter what organizational trends evolved, even that sensible step almost died in the 1970s-1990s when the box-and-three-bar map symbol began disappearing from map reading manuals. Fortunately, however, the Army has now put this right to a large degree, having rediscovered the value in the concept and word REGIMENT and promoted its use to universal approbation. Indeed for us, our official nickname is the TOMAHAWK REGIMENT.

'Battle Groups' came and went and the current version of a temporary formation is called an SBCT or Stryker Brigade Combat Team, a light and mobile division in miniature mounted on Stryker wheeled vehicles connected by interlocking command, control, communications and intelligence systems. But do not forget, the key building block of every SBCT is a battalion and battalions are historically parts of regiments!

Secondly, in the early 1960s, the 23rd, or part of us, was stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia and became the key infantry participants in a 'whole division' test to see whether the use of helicopters would survive use on the battlefield. For several months 2/23 and 3/23rd were stand-alone infantry battalions OPCON to the experimental 11th Air Assault Division (Test).

When President Lyndon Johnson announced on 28 July 1965, that he was sending the air assault test division to Vietnam, it was hurriedly renamed the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and the two Benning Tomahawk battalions were immediately redesignated the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 7th Cavalry Regiment, First Cavalry Division (Airmobile).¹ What serious minded Tommies thought about that is not known as they started wandering around wearing yellow bandanas and saying 'Garry Owen' to each other in very loud voices.

And so it was that the First and Second Battalions of Tomahawks, were now in America's first airmobile division, deployed to the Central Highlands of Vietnam when on 14-16 November, ex-Tommies amongst the 450 troopers of the First Battalion 7th Cavalry engaged in the battles of Ia Drang and Albany against some 2,000 North Vietnamese soldiers. American losses were 234 killed in action, more than were killed in any regiment, Union or Confederate, at the battle of Gettysburg. WE SERVE?
We served indeed.

1: 1965 when 1st Cav Div was chosen to become the Army's first airmobile division, the 2nd Infantry Division and the 11 Air Assault Division (Test) at Fort Benning were reflagged as the 1st Cavalry Division, ie swapping the 1st Cavalry Division Korea with the 2nd Infantry Division at Fort Benning.

Vietnam 1966-1972

As the Army put it in a carefully worded briefing for Congress: 'The Vietnam War is often regarded as a low point for the U.S. Army due to the use of drafted personnel, the unpopularity of the war with the U.S. public and frustrating restrictions placed on the military by U.S. political leaders.'

Be that as it may, bit by bit, little by little, from the early 1960s the US Government increasingly convinced itself that it could materially assist the unstable government of South Vietnam in confronting and defeating the troops of a more purposeful, less corrupt communist North Vietnam and their local allies, the Viet Cong, as well as winning the hearts and minds of the population of South Vietnam.

So from April 1965 for the next five years the US Army struggled to counter the guerrilla hit and run tactics of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. For the commanders, more troops were ever the answer. So from the mid-1960s every month saw a further ramping up of US troops deployed to Vietnam and in December 1965 the Fourth Battalion at Fort Richardson, Alaska was on the list. The current Regimental Historian, Sergeant Neil Andrews, takes up the story:

'At 0200 on 21 January 1966, a cold, snowy night, the Fourth Battalion, 23rd US Infantry Regiment 'secretly' departed by rail from Fort Richardson Alaska for Vietnam. There, in the swirling snow under the station's bright lights were all the wives, families and reporters wishing us God speed. We crawled for what seemed like eight hours to Seward where aching and weary we boarded a stinky, rusty 1944 vintage troop ship built by Kaiser Shipyards, the ghastly *General Leroy Eltinge*, destined to carry us to Hawaii along with the 4th Battalion 9th Infantry from Fort Wainwright for ten weeks of jungle training at Schofield Barracks - and then Vietnam.

'Notoriously unreliable (the *Eltinge* had broken down seven times the previous summer trying to take the 101st Airborne to Cam Ran Bay), my company, C/4/23, squeezed into one windowless compartment and the NCOs and Officers had 'staterooms' of four bunks in a room about the size of a small closet. Our bunks were in rows secured to floor-to-ceiling pipes about five feet high and four or five feet fore and aft. The aisle was wide enough to stand sideways when the bunks were unfolded, flat, coarse canvas laced tight to pipes all around, no pad. We laced our newly issued M-14s to the pipes by their slings and tied our one pair of leather boots by their laces on the corner above our heads. The space was lit by a few naked bulbs and a little PX which was open for only 15 minutes a day. Eventually we limped into Pearl City and boarded buses for Schofield Barracks.

'After ten weeks of intense training, the Second Battalion of the 23rd US Infantry made the second leg of its voyage to the then Republic of Vietnam, Hau Nghia Province, Cu Chi base aboard the *USNS Nelson Walker*. They cast off on 15 April 1966. On the day we boarded, one guy took a look at the ship and declared he was a Conscientious Objector. The MPs took him away. He didn't make the cruise which was almost pleasant until you recalled that it was taking us to Vietnam. Eventually arriving in Vietnam, we matched up with our kit shuffled up to a conveyor belt of C-130s, landing and taking off as fast as they could to Tan Son Nhut airbase. There we offloaded into an armored truck convoy escorted by Huey gunships to Cu Chi.

'When we arrived at Cu Chi, our sector of the perimeter, for hundreds of yards around, was nothing but dirt, not a strand of wire between us and the nearest treeline only 1000 meters away full of what the officers called 'hostiles'. To the south a few hundred yards away, the units who had preceded us by a few months were erecting a city of tents, bunkers and streets. They had cleared the VC off their real estate and now it was our turn.

'Still in our starched stateside fatigues and leather boots we dug and dug and dug for days on end. And night time was no better. It was DARK and you had to memorize your ever-changing company area lest you fell into a VC hole stuffed with concertina - which I did - lucky enough to emerge with only scratches and punctures but enough to get yet another tetanus shot. We had no lights except flashlights and two gas lanterns. Flashlight batteries were like gold. And we were always short on water. We had only one small water trailer to supply both ourselves and the mess hall, so our fluid intake was basically two cans of warm beer a day which only made you thirstier. As for hygiene, we had no shower at all for weeks until we rigged a couple of 55 gallon drums on stilts dispensing a trickle of non-potable water.

We were not the only people who were busy. C-123s made low passes in the distance spraying overgrown areas with Agent Orange - a 50/50 mixture of the chemical and diesel fuel. Around our perimeter we had front row seats as air strikes (called 'shows') from F1-A's and F100s dropped ordinance on tree lines far and near strafing the nearest ones with 20mm Vulcan Gatling guns. Then every few days the B52s would bomb more distant enemy strongholds and the earth would shake. It sounded like a thunderstorm. At night it was all that plus flashing in the sky, hence no doubt the code name "ARC LIGHT" for such strikes.

'From the base 4.2 mortars were soon firing harassment and interdiction rounds at night from 30-40 yards off. Also Division artillery (155, 175, 8") fired at random intervals around the clock, and more for fire missions. Hueys came and went ceaselessly. It was now a real war which was becoming progressively more noisy with more troops firing more weapons, and the base supporting more operations with fire missions and air strikes. Ops

were 24-7 and a lot of action was still close to the base. When we moved the VC away, and moved farther out ourselves, they moved back and mortared the base, like a see-saw.

‘Outside what was now ‘the wire’, we began patrolling in earnest, learning all the time. Watch your step. Watch everywhere. Most of our casualties came from home-made booby traps, a hand grenade tied to a string and pulled from a rusty tin can or explosives removed from a bomb or artillery dud. One of our C Company squad leaders was pierced by a camouflaged punji-stake smeared with excrement and our Battalion Surgeon, Captain Arthur Lewis, was killed by one fastened to a tree. The 25th Aid Receiving Station was named after him. And soon there were firefights day and night, first a few shots, then more, then a roar. If you were in one, you wondered when your ears would stop ringing. The first Tomahawk killed by gunshot was on 10 May and soon after C Company had two more KIA.



M113 Armored Personnel Carriers, originally called ‘tin taxis’ by straight-legged infantrymen. Despite vulnerabilities to rocket propelled grenades, they were the mainstay of the 4/23(M) and enabled it to patrol and fight over a huge area in Vietnam.

‘Meanwhile, we still lacked which we deserved to have if we were to prosecute this war effectively. So individuals from our unit whose lifelong skill-sets veered towards the dark arts were selected to take a duce-and-a-half truck to Saigon from time to time to reallocate US property going to shameful waste on the Saigon docks and warehouses. We reasoned that the “tip of the spear” doing all the war-stuff (us), was actually the highest, not the lowest

priority. So with that moral imperative firmly in place, we secured just enough tools, desks, wood (a truckload of prime luan mahogany veneer plywood) for shelving and outfitting the EM Mess, connexes of beer and even a large generator so each hooch had a light bulb all of which made our neck of Cu Chi more and more liveable. One of our enterprising Sp4s borrowed a jeep next to the Officers' Club and traded it to the nearby Aussies for one of their Browning 9mm automatics, which, of course, we badly needed. But we still had no jungle fatigues until we were sent to guard the Bien Hoa air base and pulled laundry duty. The rear area guys didn't know what hit them when the Tomahawks came to town.

'Inevitably the Army's version of 'civilization' came to Cu Chi. At around six weeks in-country, heavier bunker kits arrived and soon we had a new bunker line built, tin roofs on many hooches, which were also sandbagged, wire laid and we built larger buildings like mess halls and supply bunkers with concrete floors, good structure for CP hooch, and a sandbagged ammo store. And we had to get STRAC ourselves. Shirts were required if you left the company area, sleeves had to be rolled down after dark, we put on rank insignia and to cap it all off, rocks were placed in neat rows around the orderly hooch and painted white. The 4/23rd had arrived and the war could begin.'

Intense patrolling and planned interdictions started immediately. The 4/23(M) initially based out of Cu Chi then when their armored personnel carriers (M113) arrived, they eventually relocated to Tay Ninh and Fire Support Base Rawlins and Hunter between Tay Ninh and the Cambodian border. The Battalion's area of operations was vast, straddling the landmass between Cambodia and Saigon, capital of the Republic of Viet Nam. The task now was to interdict infiltration by the North Vietnamese who, having left the Ho Chi Minh Trail were intent to reach the suburbs of Saigon.

This meant a seemingly endless series of patrols, night ambushes and responses, typical of which was recalled by Lieutenant (later Lieutenant Colonel) Donnie Shelton for *We Serve*, the Regiment's journal:

'At about 1800, the radio leapt into life. A sizeable enemy force had stumbled into BLUEGRASS, as one of our ambush patrols was codenamed, and there was hell to pay. The radio/telephone operator put his cassette tape recorder next to the radio and turned it on as the Battalion rapid reaction force fired up their engines and hurried to the scene of the conflict.

'On the radio you would have heard me, Donnie Shelton, then a lieutenant and platoon leader of the rapid reaction force, Staff Sergeant Douglas Conn, my Platoon Sergeant and Specialist Fourth Class Otis Ford, the patrol's RTO. His leader, the leader of the ambush patrol, was Sergeant Perry Basham.

‘It was just sunset and getting dark when a sizeable infiltrating force of North Vietnamese ran right into the eight Tomahawks and one sniper who made up BLUEGRASS. Sergeant Perry and his men quickly engaged the enemy with all their fire power and having lit the touch paper, so to speak, fought their way to a pick up site for extraction out of the contact area in order to leave the way clear for us to finish the task.

‘Within minutes my platoon was enroute at speed to either pick up the patrol or reinforce and continue the battle. That would be my call once I got there. On the tape you could hear me asking Sergeant Basham if he could account for all his troops. This was important because as it was at night, everyone was firing their weapons in all directions and confusion reigned. ‘Roger that’ came the reply. All the Tomahawks were identified and giving a good account of themselves, yes, all except the sniper. Where was he? Was he wounded or killed?

‘Sergeant Conn reassured Sergeant Basham that we would be there as fast as we could, moving through the jungle with ten armored personnel carriers bristling with M60 and 50 Caliber machine guns mounted on each vehicle ready to fire. And our response was not alone. The battalion had already called in artillery and helicopter gunships which were enroute to support our mission as well.

‘Fortunately Sergeant Basham got alongside my track as I arrived and briefed me. We thereupon formed line abreast and started to sweep up the hostiles. The battle lasted for several hours that night. Happily, every man in BLUEGRASS was accounted for and we even found the sniper as well. Sergeant Basham was courageous and led his Patrol with distinction. He accomplished his mission and no one was left behind. For his leadership he was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor and as for the enemy, let us just say they had a very, very bad night.’¹

There were set piece battles as well as by mid-1967 the North Vietnamese grand strategy for the south was taking shape. The principle idea was to lure the incoming Americans away from the cities and large towns so that they, the North Vietnamese Army and their local guerrillas the Viet Cong, could infiltrate urban areas with soldiers and sympathizers with relative ease. They thereupon began sending several divisions down south to carry out this plan.

More was yet to come : the Tet Offensive

The first large-scale evidence of this huge push was kicked off in the Vietnamese new year, Tet 1968, when in January/February the NVA attacked thirty-six of forty-four provincial capitals, five of the six major cities, sixty-four district capitals and fifty hamlets. Unexpected as it was, unanalyzed as it was,

1: Shelton, LTC D., ‘After Action Report’ *We Serve*, Summer 2020.

the grand plan almost succeeded and only for the tenacity of individual units, both US and Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN), preventing what became known as the First Tet Offensive from becoming a disaster. Some of the most sustained and violent episodes of the whole war were about to unfold in the exact area of operations held by the 23rd, some 40km northwest of Saigon abutting onto the disgorgement spout of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

For the 4/23rd, its involvement in the Tet Offensive began on 4 February at the small village of Ap Cho, just south of the Cu Chi Base Camp. For some considerable time before, the 4/23rd had been daily escorting vital supply convoys back and forth between Cu Chi and Saigon through Ap Cho. Back and forth each convoy, including huge fuel tankers (called 'rolling bombs' by their drivers), made the round-trip journey with minimal fuss, ignorant of an astounding feat of construction going on behind the flimsy walls of the sleepy village they thundered through. Little did anyone realize that at Ap Cho, hoards of NVA engineers were secretly turning the scattered village into a large fort with concrete pill boxes and firing positions united by a network of tunnels to barracks, hospitals and messing facilities. Their goal was simple: to strangle all road-borne travel in every direction.



Rare photograph of B Company, 4/23rd(M) sweeping at the base of the enemy held mountain Nui Ba Den, Tay Ninh Province, Vietnam, c. February 1970. The soldier in the foreground was an ex-Viet Cong who surrendered (Chu Hoi program) and became a 'Kit Carson Scout' named after General Crook's scouts in the Indian Wars. The Battalion Intelligence Officer rated him 'very good'. The fourth track from the left in the rear was a flame-thrower track called a 'Zippo'.

All was quiet, day in and day out in Ap Cho until the evening run on 4/5 February when the lead track guarding the returning convoy suddenly found the road blocked. Then, as one of our witnesses recalls 'All hell broke loose'. The convoy was being ambushed.

Immediately, the Tomahawks on escort duty reacted with ferocity and once the highway was again cleared, the convoy (which that night consisted of an unusually large number of fuel tankers) saw their chance and broke out, 'picking up speed like they were being chased by the devil....' It was amazing that no one at the front had an accident as it would have resulted in the whole convoy piling up 'like an incandescent accordion.'

To reel back a day, at about the same time on the previous evening, the First Platoon of the 4/23rd's A Company had been moving north to control the crossing at the Hoc Mon Bridge north of Ap Cho enabling the free flow of traffic for another 25th Infantry Division Mech outfit pulling back to Saigon. The well-entrenched NVA at Ap Cho and Hoc Mon were waiting. 'A vicious fire fight ensued in which two of us were KIA and several wounded with me being one of them. We also lost two APCs from RPG fire. We did not know it at the time but elements of the 3/22rd, a straight-leg infantry unit, was having a major engagement at Ap Cho and things were not going well with them either.'

Indeed, for ten days, the 3/22 Infantry had been engaged in fierce combat in that area before the Tomahawks rolled in, line abreast, to support them on 13 February to 'retake the rubble' as that was all of Ap Chu which was left. 'The going was rough. In that push we lost all the APCs and seven of our guys were killed or wounded' but by evening the 4/23rd had retaken about a third of what was left of Ap Cho and planned to finish the job the next day. With daybreak, while artillery pounded the area, the 4/23 pulled back, regrouped and attacked again, three companies abreast, C Company spearheading a daring 'pedal to the metal' assault up the middle.

'That day I got hit five or six separate times. My platoon lost two tracks, one by a mine and another by an RPG.... I then got blown out of a third APC when it too was hit with an RPG. Captain Lam, our company commander, pointed out my bloody shirt to me at the same time he ordered me to take out some enemy in a bomb crater. He did offer me some first aid, but dummy me said 'I'm okay' and went out smartly. As we advanced through the smoke, no one could see anything as I went from flank to flank... I was a non-electric popup target. I raised up to tell the RTO to send a message to the captain and got what I thought was the worst hit in the nose I ever got in any fight... got back up and this time got a sucking chest wound and a bullet in my right forearm. I remember thinking what it would be like to get hit with a bullet, and now I knew. The guys got me out and I woke up in Japan. But our unit did not stop pressing the attack.'

There are many more pieces of this story to be told awaiting discovery in our archives, but suffice it to record that, as a wholly impartial chronicler of the same action wrote definitively only a few days later: *'The result was a complete success, pointing out the advantage of mechanized infantry over straight leg. In only two days*

[the 4/23rd] did what the 22nd Infantry could not do in ten days.²

Wrap Up

Many are the books and articles which have been written about the Tet Offensive of 1968, but few – so far – have drawn deeply from the experiences of Tomahawks who fought and won the seminal battle of Ap Cho, one of the first times the US engaged very large numbers of well-trained North Vietnamese fighting from sophisticated fortifications.

Then in April 1968 the NVA tried again to take Saigon, Tan Son Nhut and even Tay Ninh. These plans were increasingly thwarted by units of the 25th Infantry³ Division. ‘Shredded by losses incomprehensible to an American commander,’ North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces either scattered or retreated into Cambodia⁴ where the Tomahawks followed them.

Then in July 1970 the Battalion spearheaded the invasion into Cambodia and after that incursion, the 4/23(M) left Tay Ninh for Xuan Loc east of Saigon until ordered to stand down in November 1970 when it returned to Alaska and was inactivated. The Battalion lost 329 KIA in Vietnam and WE SERVE took on a new meaning.

Record

Campaign Participation

Counteroffensive; Counteroffensive Phase II; Counteroffensive Phase III; Tet Counteroffensive; Counteroffensive phases IV, V and Tet 69; Summer-Fall 1969; Winter-Spring 1970; Sanctuary Counteroffensive; Counteroffensive Phase VII.

Decorations

Valorous Unit Award Saigon
Valorous Unit Award Tay Ninh.



Sticky moment on the field of battle after an action to thwart the ingress of a substantial North Vietnamese force bound for Saigon. Here then Captain Drew interrogates (no other word for it) the American advisor of a South Vietnamese unit which was not where it ought to have been, when it should have been. A platoon commander, wearing a flack jacket recently reshaped by a rocket propelled grenade and the helmeted battalion intelligence officer look on equally bemused.

2: The Regimental online archive has a considerable amount of material on Vietnam. Specific articles to date in *We Serve* relating to that period include: LTC D Shelton *After Action Report*, Summer 2020; Sgt Neil Andrews *Alaska to Hawaii* and *Hawaii to Cu Chi*, Winter 2020, Summer 2021; Sgt Terry Bohlinger, Sgt Stephen Johnson, Sgt Richard Shortes, Sgt Brock Sloan, *Non-Electric Pop-Up Target*, a brief story of the Battle of Ap Cho, Defence of Saigon, Winter 2021; S/Sgt Donald Jenks, *A Tomahawk's Experience in the Battle of Tay Ninh*, 6 June 1969, Winter 2023; Capt Patrick Madison *I am convinced the men of Bravo Company saved my life*, Winter 2023; S/Sgt Joseph Evangelista, *Remembering 9 January 1970*; Sgt Alan Kershaw, *A day unlike many others*, Summer 2024; Sp4 Justin Stone, *Captain Robert Andrews*, Summer 2021.

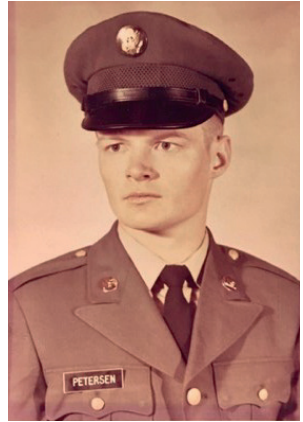
Specialist Danny John Petersen Medal of Honor

Specialist Fourth Class Danny John Petersen (11 March 1949 - 9 January 1970) was a US Army soldier who was posthumously awarded the US. military's highest award for valor, the Medal of Honor, for his actions in the Vietnam War.

Danny John Petersen was born on 11 March 1949 in Horton, Kansas. He joined the Army from Oskaloosa, Kansas.

Medal of Honor Citation

Sp4 Petersen distinguished himself on 9 January 1970 while serving as an armored personnel carrier commander with Company B during a combat operation against a North Vietnamese Army Force estimated to be of battalion size. During the initial contact with the enemy, an armored personnel carrier was disabled and the crewmen were pinned down by the heavy onslaught of enemy small arms, automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenade fire. Sp4 Petersen immediately maneuvered his armored personnel carrier to a position between the disabled vehicle and the enemy. He placed suppressive fire on the enemy's well-fortified position, thereby enabling the crewmembers of the disabled personnel carrier to repair their vehicle. He then maneuvered his vehicle, while still under heavy hostile fire to within 10 feet of the enemy's defensive emplacement. After a period of intense fighting, his vehicle received a direct hit and the driver was wounded. With extraordinary courage and selfless disregard for his own safety, Sp4 Petersen carried his wounded comrade 45 meters across the bullet-swept field to a secure area. He then voluntarily returned to his disabled armored personnel carrier to provide covering fire for both the other vehicles and the dismounted personnel of his platoon as they withdrew. Despite heavy fire from 3 sides, he remained with his disabled vehicle, alone and completely exposed. Sp4 Petersen was standing on top of his vehicle, firing his weapon, when he was mortally wounded. His heroic and selfless actions prevented further loss of life in his platoon. Sp4 Petersen's conspicuous gallantry and extraordinary heroism are in the highest traditions of the service and reflect great credit on him, his unit, and the U.S. Army.



It is highly fitting that Specialist Petersen's relations accepted Danny's commanding officer's invitation to unveil the monument to fallen Tommies at Fort Benning, Georgia on 25 September 2026.

The Global War on Terror

In September 2001 President George Bush launched a new phase of American war fighting when he spoke for the first time of a 'war on terror' coined in direct reference to the 9/11 terrorist attack within the continental United States coordinated by al-Qaeda. I

With the extraction from Vietnam and two centuries of experience in downsizing after a conflict, the Army planned to do it again by reducing its strength by almost 23% from 750,000 to 580,000 as well as by almost completely stopping conscription. It also began to treat the Regular Army, National Guard and Reserves as a single force. Called Total Force, mandating that extended operations against a hostile force would only proceed when all three components were involved in forming the response.

The 23rd was right in the middle of this swirl of activity. Activations and inactivations of 23rd battalions came and went in bewildering frequency during this time. One commanding officer from that time told Sergeant Andrews, our regimental historian, 'We hardly dared to answer the telephone.' In fact the total number of such moves affecting one or more of the Regiment's battalions between 1986 and 2019 was no less than twenty. Finally, discontent with this constant disruptive, unnecessary and expensive merry-go-round, sense prevailed, at least to a degree, and the current configuration is:

1st Battalion, 1st SBCT, 2 ID, Joint Base Lewis-McCord, Washington

2nd Battalion, 1st SBCT, 4 ID, Fort Carson, Colorado

4th Battalion, 2nd SBCT, Joint Base Lewis-McCord, Washington.¹

In short, without America noticing it, the westernization of the world was increasingly opposed by a rising tide of Fundamentalism which swept the Islamic world. This nascent feeling hardened into a perception that the west and Israel were determined to crush Muslim civilisations and culture. Its soft aspect manifested itself in reviling the 'blue jeans' world in dress and manners and its hard aspect was in unleashing capricious lethal attacks around the world when and where it could. Some of these actions were state sponsored, others homemade.

This anti-western anger took the form of random bombings through the 1990s reaching a highpoint on 11 September 2001 with an attack on the Twin Trade Towers in New York and the Pentagon. As our Regimental historian noted at the time: 'Geographically, much of the wellspring for these lethal activities came from the middle east, yes, and Afghanistan in particular, a hotbed for arming and training angry Muslim youths from all over the world, funded largely by oil money. In addition we in the west finally had to recognize our reliance on Persian Gulf and Saudi oil. All this resulted in the Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm 1990-1991) and continued operations in both Afghanistan (Operation Enduring

1: These assignments do not include extensive foreign tours, especially to Korea.

Freedom/Enduring Sentinel 2001-2021+) and Iraq (the Global War on Terror 2003-15+).'

Thus for over two decades the US was conducting active combat in two theaters at the same time, hence all three battalions of the 23rd saw continual service in Afghanistan and Iraq. To update the old catchphrase from the Philippines Insurrection days: 'Does the 23rd circumnavigate the globe? We certainly do.' That catchphrase could now be: 'Does the 23rd fight two major wars at once? We certainly can.' And the Pentagon knew it.



Commanche Company (C/1-23) penetrating the Taliban IED obstacle belt south of Zangabad.

Global War on Terror - Afghanistan

In response to the 11 September 2001 attacks, the US under the NATO flag (injury to one means retaliation by all), invaded Afghanistan in October 2001. What began as a short term deployment against recognized forces morphed into fighting a major counterinsurgency, resulting in the deaths of more than 4,000 US Armed Forces members in Afghanistan as at March 2008. This was called Operation Enduring Freedom followed by Operation Enduring Sentinel 2014-2003 called OES. Our First Battalion fought OEF 11-12 and 12-13, the Second Battalion OEF 12-13 then OES 18-19, the Fourth Battalion fought OEF 09-11 and OEF 12-13.

There were two overarching campaigns: *OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom)* and *OFS (Operation Freedom Sentinel)*.

First Battalion, Afghanistan:

OEF 2003-2004, 2006-2007, 2009-2010, 2011-2012, 2012-2013

Second Battalion, Afghanistan:

OEF 2012-2013, OFS 2018-2019

Fourth Battalion, Afghanistan:

OEF 2009-2011, 2012-2013

Those who served in any part of the 23rd in that era will attest that each battalion in the Regiment had distinctive challenges. Most of the tours were counterinsurgency oriented and had a similarity about them but each battalion also had distinctive challenges. For example, the Fourth deployed in 2009, the first Stryker unit to deploy to Afghanistan and was the only Stryker battalion to operate in the remote, mountainous terrain of Zabul Province 'which required greater logistical, coordination, maintenance and care of equipment than any other unit up country, if not the whole of Afghanistan.

The Second had their counterinsurgency war to fight as well and as for the First, it was alerted for deployment in July 2011 in support of Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan, which is to say each of the rifle companies was re-tasked to support Village Stability Operations, a well-intentioned 'Peace Corps style project' to help the populus help themselves and foster economic independence. The Battalion thereupon exploded across the United States, training in agricultural and community-building skills they would need, not least sending Tommies to learn viniculture in California! Never in the history of the US Army has there been a more extraordinary assignment!

But the Army is the Army. All was not going well in Kandahar and forty-five days before the Battalion was to deploy, the 'Peace Corps remit' was ditched and the Battalion was re-tasked to become a battlespace owner in Regional Command South with the 3-2 SBCT Headquarters and the 82nd Airborne Division.

As per usual, the Tomahawk reputation was such that the planners reckoned the Battalion was more than able to replace two full-strength Stryker battalions in Panjwai District in Kandahar Province – the birthplace of the Taliban, and a very kinetic area of operations.

The planners picked the right unit. The 1-23rd had come through multiple tough deployments to Iraq since 2003, and somehow the First's NCO cadre, who had seen some very tough fighting previously had largely evaded Big Army's tendency to split up winning teams. They were more or less intact and up for the challenge.

As Colonel Rutherford put it, 'As we began to refocus on this new mission, we started to receive horrific reports from the multiple battalions we would be replacing: dozens of killed, hundreds of wounded, dozens of amputees, a fight every day. The units we were replacing had given up the initiative to the Taliban, ceded the terrain outside their small combat outposts to the enemy, and ultimately were just holding on waiting to leave.



'I think all of us were taken aback by the violence of the fight we would inherit, but were confident in the quality of our tough, realistic training, building upon the standards and discipline we had invested so much time into prior to undertaking our new mission. We were, after all, an elite unit. We were Tommies.'

'When we arrived, the 82d Airborne Division and 3-2 SBCT, increased our combat power by attaching two companies from the 64th Infantry to us, increasing the combat power we could bring to bear. And they kept coming! We would see additional US companies and Afghan units badgering to join us until we became Combined Task Force Tomahawks over the deployment – indeed, at one point the CTF Tomahawks had almost 2,000 soldiers. Reputation enhancing, indeed!

Colonel Wilson 'Trey' Rutherford IV is a seventh generation soldier, graduating from West Point in 1993 into the Infantry. In his remarkable and distinguished 29 year career he commanded airborne and mechanized infantry units at increasingly senior operational and peace-keeping multi-national roles around the world, not least in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Poland, Czech Republic, Cuba, Somalia, Kenya (commanding troops from the British Parachute Regiment), Iraq and Afghanistan, including, of course, 1-23rd, the key element of Task Force Tomahawk in the Panjawai District of Kandahar. He has also commanded the 1st Armored Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, deploying the Brigade across Eastern Europe as part of OPERATION ATLANTIC RESOLVE, strengthening relations between NATO partners and beyond. Colonel Trey's most recent assignments include Chief of Staff of the 7th Infantry Division at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington and the 'legal, command and holistic development' of all 4,400 Cadets at West Point.

We used the first month on the ground to gain a better understanding of what we had inherited and how we would have to change how we could shake the dice afresh in Panjwai. Early on, as the fighting season approached, we realized that something had to change – that we would have to reduce the Taliban’s ability to lay mines and cause fear. Only one answer: we would have to take the fight to the Taliban every day, both where they didn’t expect it, as well as where they were prepared for us. And this is what we did. It was exhausting but being ‘on their case’ with reliable Afghani and Allied partners as well as our Aviation brothers, ultimately led to local defeat of the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban including a popular uprising!

Yet just when the Afghans had a chance to change the course of their lives, other factors intervened and ultimate success was, alas, taken from our hands.’ I

It was the longest war in the military history of the United States, surpassing the length of the Vietnam War (c. 1955-1975) by approximately six months.



'Tomahawks unleash hell' by Jody Harmon

Global War on Terror - Iraq

Each battalion of our famous Regiment deployed time and again to Iraq as the *Iraqi Freedom* combat streamers attest.¹ For example, The First Battalion deployed to Iraq in October 2003-2007 as one of the key powerhouses of Operation Iraqi Freedom and began operations in Ad Deluiyah before displacing to Mosul conducting a relief in place with elements of the 101 Airborne Division occupying the western side of the Tigris River steadily eroding the insurgent threat in Nineveh Province. This deeply angered the insurgents and on 4 August 2004 the entire battalion had to repel a large co-ordinated attack which added, if possible, to their reputation throughout Iraq and beyond. The Second had its adventures as well between 2003-2019 and was widely acknowledged by Iraqis and Allies alike as ‘hard people and totally in the game’.

Meanwhile, the First and Second’s sister battalion, the Fourth, which had seen so much action in Vietnam, was being reborn for service in Iraq. Rare as it is to capture the whole saga of a unit’s reactivation, yet the Regimental archives have the enlightening story of its standing up and road to a new war, a war in Iraq. Colonel John Norris, who led the team which did it, takes up the tale²:

1: *Iraq: OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom)*

First Battalion, Iraq:

OIF 2003-2004 Samarra, Tal Afar and Mosul, Al Kutt, Al Hayy, Al Suwaria, Yousifiakh;

OIF 2005-2006 Mosel, Rawah, Tal Afar, Baghdad;

OIF 2006-2007 Baghdad, Arrowhead Ripper, Surge, Baqubah (June-September 2007)

OIF 2009-2010

Second Battalion, Iraq:

OIF 2003-2004 Samarra, Tal Afar and Mosul, Al Kutt, Al Hayy, Al Suwaria,

OIF 2005-2006

OIF 2007-2008, The Surge, Baghdad, Diyala Province, Baqubah

OIF 2009-2010

OIF 2018-2019

Fourth Battalion, Iraq: OIF 2005-2006

2: For access to the complete articles from which this synopsis is drawn, go to

www.23rdinfomahawksjournal.com.

Colonel John Norris, ‘Like a Division in Miniature, the Fourth’s Activation’, *We Serve*, Winter 2020

Colonel Clint Baker, ‘The Fourth Battalion’s Road to War: from Alaska to Iraq’, *We Serve*, Summer 2021

Colonel Teddy Kleisner, ‘From Company to Battalion Command’, *We Serve*, Winter 2020

Captain Robert Renneisen and Colonel John Norris, ‘To Commemorate and Celebrate’, *We Serve*, Winter 2020

The Fourth Battalion's Road to War:
Starting from scratch in Alaska
Part One of the story of the 2003 4/23 Infantry's Activation
Colonel John Norris³

In 2003 the 4th Battalion 23rd US Infantry, located in Anchorage Alaska, reactivated itself and then transformed itself from a straight led infantry outfit into a key part of the newly formed 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT). This is the story of that huge change: to activate the battalion, stand it up from the ground, transform it, equip it with the new Stryker combat vehicle and then train, deploy and fight in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom earning the Valorous Unit Award.



The Fourth Battalion of our famous regiment is no stranger to transformation. Indeed, forty years earlier on 25 January 1963 another transformation took place, when the 4/23 transformed itself from a light infantry unit into a mechanized infantry battalion of Vietnam fame. Then, in 2003, the Army was ready to roll out its next combat organizational iteration known as 'modular brigades' based around a new vehicle: the Stryker. Named the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) the new SBCTs were to be 'a division in miniature' able to fight and take care of themselves largely independent of cumbersome support services, important as they were. As the 172nd Infantry Brigade based in Alaska had only two organic infantry battalions it needed another Stryker battalion to become the 172nd SBCT and so once again the 4/23rd fulfilled that role.

This is where the story begins. In June 2003, I arrived at Fort Wainwright, Alaska to be told that as a major soon to become a lieutenant colonel, I was to take command of that third Stryker battalion. Only one problem. It did not exist. I was all alone: no soldiers, no equipment, no assigned buildings and no time or room for organic growth. So I simply decamped some 300 miles south to our ancestral home, Fort Richardson, and set up there. For the duration of the activation, transformation, train up and deployment to Iraq we operated as a geographically separate infantry battalion.

3: A Tommie through and through, in 2003 Colonel John Norris activated , transformed, fielded Strykers, trained and deployed the Fourth Battalion from Ft Richardson, Alaska leading it in combat for 16 months during Operation Iraqi Freedom until December 2006. He then commanded 4-2 SBCT with combat operations in Iraqi Freedom from 2009-2010 as well as commanding high level multinational operations including the Joint Planning Support Element (JPSE) in support of global joint task forces.

Ft Richardson greeted the arrival of a one-man battalion with some bemusement, but with a bit of help from US Army Alaska, barracks and buildings scheduled for demolition were reprieved and I set up headquarters in a barracks alongside some of the garrison staff. It was not optimal but it supported our requirements as best as could be expected under the circumstances.

In addition to becoming one of the newest combat formations in the Army's arsenal, with the newest combat organization and latest equipment we would also be designated and organized as a COHORT Battalion (Cohesion, Operational Readiness and Training) as part of the US Army Unit Manning System (UMS). Under the UMS concept, the 4/23rd would be manned with over 760 personnel who would stay posted together for at least four years before any personnel transfers would be authorized. This was the 4/23rd as it should be and we welcomed it. I am convinced that we validated the UMS concept and this fact alone contributed to the battalion's overwhelming success later in combat as we had a cohesive bond that endured well beyond our service in the battalion and to our Nation.

Back on the ground, my command group gradually came together: Command Sergeant Major Dennis Zavodsky, Executive Officer, Major Pat Mangin, Operations Officer, Major Clint Baker and the Operations Sergeant Major Cliff Docktor. They formed an incredibly talented battalion command group. Together we quickly went about the task of building our road to war strategy by identifying the mountain of tasks that lay before us. The initial challenge was what to do first.

Reception, integration and the establishment of the companies was the first critical task in our unit stand up. Company commanders were designated along with a first sergeant if one was available. One of the unique challenges due to manning a battalion from the ground up is that we did not have any sergeants or first lieutenants. Typically, under normal circumstances like this you can leverage adjacent units for a little local talent, but as we were out in the middle of nowhere and the only other local infantry unit had deployed to Afghanistan, so we were unable to fill the shortages. No problem because over time, we grew our own but in the getting there you can appreciate the impact on training as well as the establishment of company level processes and administration.

And the ranks began to fill. For once the Army had a good idea and we benefitted from it. COHORT was a program whereby a new intake trained together in Basic and Advanced Individual Training and then served together. We were to receive one of the first tranches of COHORTS. They began descending on Alaska from all over arriving individually, in small groups and large groups. The impact on Ft Richardson's personnel reception capacity was overwhelming ('...they actually know each other!') and so was the challenge of Alaska weather. This forced the battalion to be creative in how we welcomed and integrated the new Tomahawk soldiers. Most arrived without adequate civilian winter clothing. Some actually signed in wearing only flip flops and shorts! Working with the installation we

were able to draw cold weather clothing and issue it immediately upon arrival so that we could safely take care of our soldiers.

Our new soldiers continued coming and gradually we started resembling a fully manned infantry battalion, but one with a difference. We were not as alone as we had thought we were. Many Tomahawk veterans from Vietnam remained in Alaska after their combat tours. They learned of our activation, heard we were a new generation of Tommies and reached out to the battalion excited that 4/23IN was back in town. They began knocking on our door to see what they could do to help us get up and running and set about the task of assembling the Vietnam Veterans Support at large. Soon our veteran support group expanded to include legends from yesterday like Colonel Emil Stryker and Sergeant First Class Chuck Main, both hard core Korean veterans and in Sergeant Main's case a third generation Tomahawk. All were extremely active in bringing the new fourth battalion back into the 23rd Regiment.

So with all the pieces coming together: the pre-existing bond between the guys, the exciting new equipment, the confidence in growing our own leaders, our veterans in support and the difficult international scene, it was understood that standing up and fielding Strykers would produce a new generation of lethal Tomahawks and we would be ready. WE SERVE.



Part of standing up was doing our duty to Fort Richardson and the community. The citizens expected a Nordic-focused infantry force and we did our best to at least look like it!

The Fourth Battalion's Road to War:
From Alaska to Iraq
Part Two of the story of the 2003 4/23 Infantry's Activation
Colonel Clint Baker⁴

Now Colonel Clint Baker, the 4th Battalion's Operations Officer for three and a half years (including 16 months in Iraq) takes on that remarkable tale. He tells how the Army finally wised-up to the advantages of cohesion, loyalty and skill retention by creating, training and deploying this new generation of Tomahawks for service in Iraq, many of whom already knew each other having been together from Basic Training in the COHORT program.

After the Battalion's re-activation in March 2004 we began our equipment fielding and train-up program in earnest. We had from April 2004 to May 2005, fourteen short months to be ready to fight in Iraq. At first blush, that does not sound overly challenging until one considers that we didn't have any weapons or equipment to speak of and we were a single battalion at Fort Richardson, Alaska separated from our Brigade headquarters and fellow battalions at Fort Wainwright by about 350 miles. I used to show a slide at Battalion training meetings that portrayed just how difficult our road to war was going to be. It said: 'Every Tomahawk Minute Counts' and so it did. Not only did we have to schedule and execute the fielding and training of every man and piece of new equipment, but at the same time we kept being dragged off to do all the ash-and-trash jobs on post (called red cycle taskings) because the only other battalion on Fort Richardson had already been deployed to Afghanistan! So with little time and no external support available, we relied on ourselves. With no one to get in the way we innovated, solved problems and behaved flexibly all of which contributed to a buoyant, positive unit culture.



4: Colonel Clint Baker, INF, (West Point 1991). In is 29-year career, he served in Korea, Panama, Afghanistan (twice), Iraq, Kosovo and Germany as well as Alaska, Louisiana and Kansas in increasingly important infantry/airborne roles. Following CGSC in 2004, Clint was a key player in the standing up of the Army's newest Stryker Battalion, the 4/23rd and its lengthy deployment in Iraq before his second tour in Afghanistan where he was the Deputy Commander of Task Force Forge and the Senior Advisor to the 215th Afghan Army Corps in Helmand Province. After serving as a Brigade Commander, Clint was selected to serve as the US Army Alaska Chief of Staff from 2018 before retiring in 2020 after 29 years of service in the Army, 20 of which was on airborne status. Clint's awards include two Legions of Merit, three Bronze Stars, Combat Infantryman's Badge, Expert Infantryman's Badge, the Ranger Tab, the Master Parachutist Badge.

I must admit that from time to time we did get some help from Big Army, not least the new Stryker Leader Course at Fort Benning. This was where Colonel Norris and I with Battalion Command Sergeant Major Dennis Zavodsky (a tough, lean/mean, *scary* paratrooper) developed our future. As the Battalion S3, I literally took the butcher block paper from those sessions back to Alaska with me and we built a fit-for-purpose long-range training plan. Fortunately it was robust enough to sustain our vision, focus, and in the end remained unchanged and crystal clear throughout the train-up. Finally, right before our activation in March, Fort Benning brought a Tactical Leader Course (TLC) to Fort Richardson to train our new home-made platoon sergeants and company officers on how you fight with a Stryker! That went a long way to getting all levels of the command team on board with our vision.

Although every day was like Christmas, not all of our new toys arrived at once. Even though we were scheduled to get the Stryker, the Army's latest vehicle 'at some time soon', all our training meanwhile would be perforce on our dismounted ability to close with and destroy the enemy on foot. And we did it holding before us the fact that we would be evaluated on our ability to be fit for mission – no easy task being a separate battalion, a long way away from everyone else; yet old school Tomahawk training management practices/discipline and an unapologetic sense of urgency became the norm and won the day so that by the time our new Strykers began arriving we were meeting all the certification requirements from higher headquarters which, by the bye, were worse than a Rubik's cube on steroids! We insisted we did everything thoroughly and the arrival of fancy equipment or not, we refused to put the cart before the horse. Our straight leg infantry-centric focus was crucial but having brand new equipment ain't too bad of a deal either!

But everything depended on our COHORT Tomahawks. We had almost no buck sergeants and zero first lieutenants, so we grew our own. Explaining this to an uncomprehending Big Army later was an interesting experience, but at the time we knew what we were doing and the nay-sayers eventually backed off. We knew we had a mission to fulfil and that none of us were going anywhere until our job was done in Iraq. Happily we had expertise on our side. Our Command Sergeant Major, Dennis Zavodsky, was a master of dismounted small unit tactics. He immediately put together a training cadre with the few seniors we had to teach the young specialists and PFCs how NOT to be team leaders but GREAT team leaders. I played my part by carving out quite a few training weeks for the company commanders to do nothing but focus on fire team and squad live fire exercises. Several of them actually went back and retrained at fire team level which is always a good indicator that people are training to standard and not just ticking the

box. And quality. As icing on the cake, our Scout and Mortar platoons went simply off the charts in terms of proficiency.

But were we all as good as we thought? Only one way to find out. We put into place our own Expert Infantryman's Badge training and testing with zero external support and it still stands out as the best in all my years in the infantry. We also taught ourselves the latest in tactical operations center and digital management. For those challenges, enter three men to whom I cannot possibly give enough credit - our Battalion Executive Officer, Major Patrick Mangin, our Operations Sergeant Major, Clifford Dockter and our S-6 Captain Clayton Moody. Geniuses all. Mangin played football at West Point and as he had commanded a company with distinction at Fort Wainwright he knew how we could maximize the training opportunities there. Dockter was a rough-talking, Bradley Master Gunner type, a bear of a man and the finest leader/soldier I ever met in almost 29 years of service. He personally appointed only the very brightest of our young COHORT Tomahawks to handle the important work of the S3 shop and its brand-new technology. Enter Captain Moody whose technical skills were the best I ever saw. Other units could never leverage the satellite-based Blue Force Tracker (BTF) in the same fashion as we did.

My constant concern was time. It was tight. Very tight, so much so we were afraid we would have to certify ourselves without having ever operated as part of the Brigade. Yet Colonel Norris was having none of this. We **would** participate in the Brigade's certifying training event. AND we would do it as a full-up battalion that was ready to deploy. Without wasting a minute, we completed fielding and training on our brand-new TOC just hours before we had to load it on a convoy headed to Fort Wainwright for the Brigade warfighter exercise. We crushed the exercise.

Time kept receding. By the time February arrived, training in Alaska was, shall we say, difficult but we were hungry for more and so our captains held a pow wow and convinced us, their seniors, that we should tell Big Army we were planning to hold our last off-post battalion FTX at Fort Lewis! After all, our Strykers had to get be taken by rail to Seattle anyway so it was a no-brainer. And so we simply did it. We got on the train with our morale sky high and made the Brigade going-away exercise simply Our exercise ace-ing every exercise in the book and Tomahawk 6 and I ran it from our tactical assault command posts, our Strykers, not telling anyone that we had hardly even been in them before! We were ready to go.

And one thing more. I could go on for days about this period in 4/23rd's history, yet history is important to a soldier from a 'heritage regiment'. We just slotted into the mold set by generations before us and our two-century

long past became a significant and powerful part of the Battalion's modern culture. John Norris had an exceptional knack for leveraging the things that would build cohesion in the Battalion, and building Tomahawk history into the Tomahawk world of today was one of the most important. I clearly remember how proud we all were to be Tomahawks! WE SERVE



'Whatever you do, don't break it! Learning to drive and fight our new Strykers.'

The Fourth Battalion's Road to War:
Being Present and Responsive in Iraq
Part Three of the story of the 2003 4/23 Infantry's Activation
Colonel John Norris⁵

With our battalion activation and training now complete we shipped our Strykers to Kuwait and began to acquaint ourselves with our probable area of operations and mission. In short, the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) of which our battalion was a key component, was replacing 1st Brigade 25th Infantry Division and our area of operations was to be the ancient city of Nineveh in Northern Iraq, the cradle of civilization which included Mosul, Iraq's second largest city with 1.6 million residents, as well as the surrounding areas on the east and west side of the Tigris River⁶.

Making a difference

Soon enough we were able to tailor-make and shape our contribution to any given situation as our operational expertise grew in several ways: from US-only squads, individual platoon, company level and battalion level operations as well as combined efforts with other specialized formations and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Given some thought, we converted these newly found experiences into an operational philosophy. In a nutshell, if we really wanted to improve security, our approach would have to be *the single-minded management of time, ie, to be always present and responsive, 24/7*. Our goal had to be able to bring to bear the right response to situations as they revealed themselves at any level from squad to battalion in minutes, bewildering the hostiles and delighting our Iraqi partners.

We shaped each of our companies responsibility around this concept of 'being present', ie being on the right street at the right time, operating by ourselves or with partner forces. We did it by maximizing the advantage which the strykers on-board space-age equipment gave us of an all-seeing eye over every street in our AO. At one glance we could see the whole neighborhood and where every stryker was. This capability gave a new definition to 'being present'. This approach meant we were often rapidly on top of an emerging situation, disrupting the insurgent's confidence that he could operate wherever and whenever in Mosel he wanted. Within weeks we were affecting their decision cycle in a big way. We knew we were on the right track when we noticed that no longer were the Iraqi security forces masking their identity for fear of being

5: This part of the story is a shortened version of Into War which you will enjoy reading at www.23rdinfotomahawksjournal.com.

6: Mosul is not only large but complex, mostly Sunni and Kurds, an age-old tribal dynamic without inserting al-Qaeda into the picture. Saddam Hussein's sons Usay and Qusay were killed there and, as we found in 2005, it was still very violent with al-Qaeda operating freely. We poked their nests and could count on daily contacts that ranged anywhere from small arms fire and simple IEDs to complex attacks, and suicide vehicle borne IEDs (SVBIED) which we soon learned was the preferred weapon against our strykers and combat outposts (COP).

identified and killed. Now it was the insurgents who were wearing the masks. We were making progress; our Iraqi partners were regaining control of their city. Present and responsive. Reaction into action.

Bagging a BOLO

The relentless application of *present and responsive* was just what we wanted to close with an otherwise elusive enemy as when on a routine patrol with my command element, we received a ‘be on the lookout’ report (BOLO) for a 4-door silver sedan with 3 military aged males (MAMs) who had reportedly just killed someone in Al Sinai, a notorious ‘chop shop’ part of Mosul known for making suicide vehicles and being a very bad place indeed. Immediately our patrols went looking for this silver sedan and, as luck would have it, within minutes my command vehicle, no less, turned into an intersection and there was the silver sedan. Seeing us, its driver freaked out, shifting into tire-smoking reverse, just like in the movies. But we, too, were on the move and when at last they abandoned their sedan my operations officer and the command TAC security team leapt from their strykers, outran the fleeing insurgents and captured them all without a shot being fired!

As the photograph shows, the silver sedan was in reality a one-stop shop consisting of a mobile command post, armory and signal shack complete with numerous cell phones. When they began ringing, my contract translator, Cooper “Coop”, a very tall, intimidating Iraqi from Texas, told the callers that something or someone called a ‘Tomahawk’ had captured their cell leader and if they wanted him back, come get him. ‘Thanks, Coop’ I thought as we sat there exposed in an open intersection with detainees, weapons and vehicles all over the place!



We need not have worried. Thanks to our present and responsive policy and our first-rate technology, the area was quickly sealed off (keeping out innocent civilians) just as enemy rounds started zinging past us sitting in the middle of the intersection. We bundled the suspects into Command Sergeant Major Dennis Zadvovsky’s Stryker and what began as a simple capture of a bolo vehicle turned into a heavy eight-hour fire fight. Our SOP was to have multiple units in zone at all times so as more Tomahawk units arrived, they quickly developed the fight and both sides sustained casualties. As we recovered our wounded we reckoned enough was enough and called in gunships.

Almost immediately they floated in, gracefully settling over the intersection like huge black swans, avoiding the telephone wires and opening up an accurate torrent of fire just feet above our heads. They were so close their expended brass cartridge shells rained down on our Strykers with such a clatter and ferocity that it literally scared the shit out of the insurgents inside the CSM's stryker. At their bad manners CSM Zavodsky was furious and he made it clear over the net that he would never allow captured hostiles to use his vehicle as a latrine ever again.

Imparting essential skills

Every day patrolling went on and when we were not doing that we put all our energy into coaching, training and conducting operations with the police and army. Sometimes a frustrating effort requiring enormous patience, but absolutely required if we were going to set the conditions for our eventual departure. Our higher had recognized this and gave us the opportunity to establish and develop Hamam Al Lil, a former agricultural college, into a combined regional training center for the ISF including both the Army and Police. As almost everyone in our battalion had all been together since Fort Richardson days, we were used to doing everything by and for ourselves, so it was no big deal to build a school from scratch. Every Tomahawk from private up simply retooled the defunct college, decided on a syllabus and began teaching courses in leadership, marksmanship, and small unit tactics. We called this training center the Northern Iraq Training Center (NIRTC) and its effectiveness soon showed up on the streets.

Suicide truck? No luck.

Meanwhile we kept up our efforts to increase the combat power of the 172 Stryker Brigade Combat Team and were content to attach Apache Company, 4/23 to the 4th (Reconnaissance) squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, located in the central Anbar Province operating in Rawah. To beef up the Cav's clout, A Company decided that it would be most useful if together we they took over Anah itself and its major intersection leading to Rawah, which was the scene of numerous roadside bombs. The 4/23rd Apaches' employment of our now habitual 'present and responding' approach made an immediate impact reducing roadside bombs in the area and significantly disrupted the future terror planned by the Abu Hamza cell already infamous for blowing up the police station and running the police out of town.

Like disturbed hornets, what was left of the Abu Hamza cell decided to come after us in a huge suicide truck packed with explosives aimed at the Anah Checkpoint itself. Our intelligence of their intention was accurate and we were ready. When it came, it came at full speed. Apache troopers engaged the truck in a hail of gunfire killing the driver instantly but the vehicle continued to roll toward the COP! It finally abutted the wall of the checkpoint and exploded in an enormous fireball destroying an exterior wall of the COP building. It was not lost on the populous that the alertness of A Company's soldiers saved lives with only four Apache soldiers getting wounded.

Indeed, word soon got around what Tomahawks could do to improve security and as a result of the way we handled incidents like the intersection at Anah and, admittedly, the deteriorating situation across Iraq, the 4/23d was identified as the ideal mobile asset. In due course our mission was changed to take on Tal Afar in western Nineveh to replace the 1st Brigade 1st Armored Division. This meant that our new AO stretched all the way from Mosul to the Syrian border including Tal Afar, Sinjar and Rabea, the border crossing point with Syria. Our battalion was taking on a brigade's job! We therefore closed down operations in a much quieter Mosul and once in Tal Afar began to apply the successful partnership lessons learned in Mosul to this new AO with three different Iraqi security forces, the border police, the Iraqi Police and the Iraqi Army.

We soon realized that none of the leaders responsible for security in the area knew each other and certainly had not worked together. We immediately saw one of the problems was that they did not have a safe place to meet, so to the surprise and deep unease of the Americans on guard duty, our Tomahawk mess hall quickly became the home of the ISF security council. There, in one secure location, we could get the leaders to relax to discuss security issues and plan combine operations over a meal. This simple gesture of hospitality, feeding my partners -and their heavily armed entourages- helped me build trust and respect, improving our partnership. When we saw the leaders exchange cell phone numbers, we were seeing real progress.

Rewarding a job well done, Iraqi style

As we contributed to partnership at command level we looked forward to working with Iraqi troops again like the young *jundi* (soldier) who flagged down my TAC when enroute to ISF HQ in Tal Afar. All by himself he had assessed that a dump truck racing towards him was a SVBIED so he calmly shot the driver, who was encased in a welded steel armored cab. My Command Stryker was just a few minutes behind the vehicle now lying on its side, wheels still spinning in front of the ISF HQs with this lone *jundi* standing there all by himself. We quickly dismounted, took the frightened *jundi* under our wing and confirmed that the truck was indeed packed to overflowing with explosives. We called forward an EOD team and, unfortunately, they blew up the recovered explosives in a small court area destroying several buildings in the process which, of course, presented us with a civil affairs problem we could have well done without!

In any event, we were later invited to a ceremony where the brave *Jundi* was singled out for his steadfastness and shooting skills. Yet instead of awarding him a medal and a handshake, the senior Iraqi flag officers in attendance gave him envelopes filled with cash! My soldiers looked at me and muttered that perhaps we should adopt the Iraqi method.

Evolving *present and responding*

In Tal Afar we developed a very close relationship with our nearby aviation battalion. With their help our *present and responding* morphed into a new combined operation called the aerial flash tactical check point (TCP) using a combination of UH 60s, AH 64s and our infantry squads. We liked this extra reach to oversee our extremely porous border but the smugglers from Syria were not so happy when they suddenly found a huge, noisy, lethal helicopter flying right in front of their trucks at eye level, its massive killing power pointed straight at them. Funny how rapidly they stopped! And as soon as they did, Tomahawks swarmed all over them and the flow of illicit goods diminished measurably. The aerial TCP was a huge success and word quickly spread in the bazaars so before long any time a helicopter flew over a truck on the road, the driver would screech to a halt even if it was not an aerial TCP.

Going home. Really?

Our twelve-month combat tour was ending and as the first battalion to deploy we would be the first battalion to leave. Block leave beckoned in our minds as we transitioned security operations, turned in our ammunition, theater property equipment, loaded our Strykers on HETs and even gave a company of strykers over to a ranger regiment who saw the value of this combat platform. Soon enough I had redeploying soldiers in three countries: two hundred of us were already back at Ft Wainwright happily reunited with their families and another hundred were in Kuwait ready to board the next freedom bird. Those of us who remained, including me, were awaiting our imminent departure to Kuwait.

This is when the phone rang. It was the brigade commander, Colonel Mike Shields, who opened his conversation by saying, ‘Are you sitting down?’ And then he informed me we were leaving. Not for America. Not for Kuwait, but for Baghdad. Our new task was to help stop the increasing sectarian violence, which we would later learn would be the height of violence in the war in Iraq. He wanted to know how fast those of us who were left could get to Baghdad and did I have any questions? Seeing my Strykers loaded on HETS outside of my window I simply said I could be there tomorrow but when will I get my battalion back? He said he was working on that and put the phone down!

End Ex

As we prepared to move out to the capital, I reflected on how we, the current soldiers assigned to the famous Fourth Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, acquitted ourselves as a counter insurgency force, restoring stability wherever we went in Iraq, working to eliminate al-Qaeda insurgents and assist the Iraqi Army, Police and ultimately civil society.

There was a price to pay, of course. Everyone in the battalion had experienced combat and the effects of war, some more than others. We had several in the



This wonderfully massive Lamassu the winged bull of the Assyrian city of Ninrud, was later blown up by the Islamic State in 2015.

command with double digit IED strikes. Many, like Sergeant Steve Robison were badly injured but none killed, mainly due to the survivability of the Stryker. In one incident, a Stryker driver, Specialist Walls, was in his buttoned-up hatch when it hit a massive IED and he suffered the compression blast which blinded and burned him. I visited him in hospital, where he lay, covered all over with bandages. When he heard my voice he immediately knew who it was and apologized for hitting the EID. I told him that I was the one who was sorry and seeing an untouched tray of food on his table asked if had eaten. He wistfully said no but thought he smelled food. I was furious. The nurse or orderly or whoever had obviously just thrown the mess tray down on the table and departed even though Specialist Walls was obviously

unable to see to eat by himself! So I sat down on his bed and fed him. Tears streamed down my face. I was unable to speak. Happily he fully recovered.

Another severely injured soldier was Sergeant First Class William Harlan whose vehicle struck a deep buried IED so powerful that it blew him out of the commander's hatch into the air over 30 feet. The combination of the blast and the landing broke all of his bones from his hips down to his toes. His patrol thought he had been killed, but miraculously he survived and after more than 18 surgeries not only was he able to walk again but continued to serve and would later be selected as the U.S. Army Soldier of the Year serving again with me when I commanded the 4-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team. The Stryker was definitely the right platform for this war and my Tomahawks were just the right soldiers to man them.

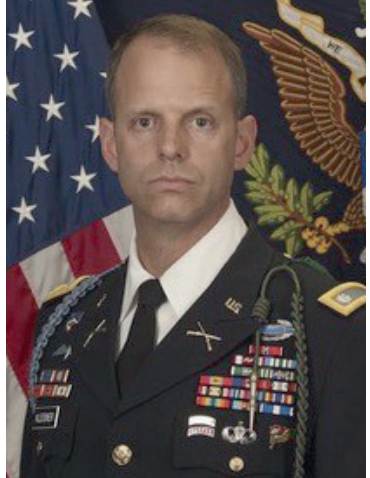
In conclusion

We had come a long way from guys showing up in Alaska with their Basic Training buddies in flip-flops and shorts. We could build from scratch, we could adapt, we could teach in a language we did not easily speak, we made *Present and Responding* part of our DNA and, above all, we could soldier. Daily we had taken the fight to the enemy mounted, on foot and now from the air and now, those of us who were left went off to Baghdad to do it all over again- which we did.

The 4/23rd earned the Valorous Unit Award for its service in Iraq in 2005-2006.
WE SERVE

On assignment in Iraq Colonel Theodore Kleisner⁷

The First Battalion's 2006-2007 deployment was the Battalion's second to the war in Iraq. At this point, the Fourth Battalion was also a veteran unit of that war, and the Second Battalion would also soon join the veteran ranks, though I think their first deployment was to Afghanistan. (None of 23rd battalions were in the same Brigade back then, which was kind of a bummer.) Our 15 month deployment can be broken down into three distinct phases: peak Sunni-vs-Shiite civil war, the counterinsurgency transition, and peak "surge." In the battalion, we had more likely describe these phases as the first months when we owned northwest Baghdad, the middle months when we roved and raided all over Baghdad, and the final months when we traveled far and wide.



In the first months we lived on Forward Operating Base Liberty, which was part of the former wilderness preserve that surrounded Baghdad International Airport. We'd see random exotic birds and deer running around while grabbing chow or communing around our hooches that were made out of shipping containers. We owned the Ghazaliyah and Shullah districts of Baghdad, which were a microcosm of the entire war.

Ghazaliyah, at the 9 o'clock of Baghdad, was a Sunni neighborhood, infested with Al Qaeda's insurgents. We called them AQIZ. The civilians in this neighborhood lived mostly in fear of them, and we had a tough time dealing with their particular preference for deep-buried IEDs. This was also the hunting grounds for the Baghdad sniper who was going viral on YouTube. If you find his video of a US soldier getting his radio ear-muff shot off his head while in the back of a Stryker, that was from Charlie Company.

Shullah, in the extreme northwest of Baghdad was a Shiite neighborhood full of Jaysh Al Mehdi insurgents who attacked us with EFP IEDs made in Iran and terrorized the Sunnis. I'd say the Shiite had won the civil war in Iraq at this point. Shullah was Bravo Company's neighborhood.

The seam where the two sectarian neighborhoods met was a vacuum of humanity.

7: Colonel Teddy Kleisner is a 27 year veteran of conflicts in the Balkans, Middle East and Afghanistan. He served for six years in the 23rd, one of many highlights was commanding the First Battalion at JBLM from 2015-2016. An avid historians of the Regiment the stone in his West Point class ring is granite from the 23rd's famous Chipyong-ni battlefield.

No one walked the streets there and most Iraqi police outposts were riddled with bullet holes and star-shaped RPG blast A Company and our HQ Coys reigned supreme there. This was a tough time for the Battalion. C Company earned more Purple Hearts in Ghazaliyah at this time than the entire rest of the Brigade. Some of our brothers were killed, and maimed. It was a normal occurrence to see murdered Iraqis laying in the street during morning patrols. Many had been murdered by Shiite death squads, which often included Iraqi police officers. There were few signs that we were winning. At the same time, this is when all of our new Tommies cut their teeth in combat and the companies coalesced into outstanding units and the reputations of our and other Stryker units were soaring.

General Petraeus comes to town

That autumn things started to change. General Petraeus' famous COIN manual came out, he and his staff came into Baghdad like the Earp brothers, and thus began 'The Surge.' The First Battalion was already making a lot of progress in Ghazaliyah and Shullah, so we were skeptical about the new mission, but it grew on us. The Battalion would essentially swarm into neighborhoods of Baghdad, smother the insurgency there while a new 'surge' unit set up and got its feet under them. Then we would move onto the next neighborhood and repeat the process -Adhamiya district (where the 82nd Airborne set up in a nasty old shopping center), Shaab & Uhr (from where the Brigade and Battalion companies attempted a thunder run through Sadr City), Mansur (a wealthy but ravished neighborhood with a zoo), New Baghdad (a tough-ass neighborhood where we spent Christmas), Rashidi (adjacent to Route Irish), the list goes on. These swarms would last days or weeks. We seriously felt like the city was our town at this point. No surge unit showed up without living in real-estate that we gave them. I can still give better directions around Baghdad than I can around the city I live in today.

It was in this period that we fought two day-long battles on Haifa street, Karkh district - an old neighborhood where buildings that looked like something out of the Biblical era comingled with abandoned embassies and modern European built residential towers. The battle marked the turn of AQIZ's high tide in Baghdad. JSOC commandos would chase their remnants out of the city in following months. We lost Hector Leija, an excellent and very popular B Company squad leader, in that battle.

Once the surge had peaked in Baghdad, we took the Tomahawk swarm on the road to Baghdad's surrounding provinces, mostly northern Babil (yes, former Babylon) and Diyala, particularly Baqubah. These were interesting times. We would depart FOB Liberty and often not see it for days or weeks. We squatted in other units' FOBs in the country-side. In many cases we had to leave our Strykers behind due to the IED threat or lack of good roads. We missed them. I recall coming in from a long night out near Yusufiyah covered head-to-toe in mud. I had fallen into a gutter/canal and my interpreter pulled me out. I told my Battalion Commander that I never wanted to be light infantry again. He just laughed.

WE SERVE

An Afterword

Colonel Dan Rayca

The service and sacrifice of the Tomahawks is one of the most significant of any regiment in our Army, and includes seven Presidential Unit Citations along with 15 Medal of Honor recipients. The 23rd Infantry is a storied Regiment, with service in every major U.S. conflict since the Civil War, with surviving members who served in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. As we remember those lost in combat, we also think of the current generation of Tomahawks as they maintain vigilance and prepare to defend our Nation, along with the importance of preserving our community of service.

My own story with the Tomahawks began in the summer of 2012 in Kandahar Province Afghanistan, where I was serving as the Battalion XO for 2-508 PIR, as the 4-23 IN arrived to relieve our very grateful battalion at the end of a long tour. Throughout my career I had read some of the historical accounts about the 23rd, but this was the first time I had seen the Tomahawks up close. Serving alongside them I quickly understood the incredible legacy of sacrifice, professionalism and resolve of the Tomahawks. Fast forward three years and the taking command of a Tomahawk Battalion at Ft Lewis became the greatest honor of my career.



Colonel Daniel Rayca has more than a quarter century of military and strategic leadership experience around the world, not least in the far east. After a highly successful stint commanding the 4th Battalion and creating a training regime which has stood the test of time, he translated into the civil world, building a stellar reputation in assisting organisations to benefit from ethical behavior in business.

Any commander understands the power of their unit's connection with its history. The pride and cohesion that results from making people part of something bigger than the individual is well known. Chuck Main, a veteran of Chipyeong-ni and Heartbreak Ridge, and Fred Drew, commander for Danny Petersen (MOH) in Tay Ninh Province Vietnam, embody the living connection with the current Tomahawks. They were a catalyst for me and my fellow commanders and Tomahawk leaders in our pursuit to nurture a culture of excellence. This culminated in a celebration and tribute to the Regiment's 150 years of service in 2016. The importance of maintaining the ties with our veterans and investing in Regimental events cannot be overstated, especially with 2-23 IN at Ft Carson.

I encourage all the current commanders and others to look for ways to strengthen those Regimental connections. We have lost so many of our Korean

War veterans, and many of our Vietnam Veterans are scattered across our country. They never enjoyed the benefits of deploying and returning home to a warm welcome as a cohesive unit. Our War on Terror and peace time service veterans are also dispersed and in need of connection. The current Tomahawks need to continue to look for ways to reach out to all of them and bring them back to the Tomahawk family.

Our veterans must continue to serve too, as the active Tomahawks need you to share in their experience. Schedule your reunions near Ft Lewis or Ft Carson, reach out to the battalion command teams, tell your story, get active in the 23rd Association, or donate items from your service to the active battalion collections so that current Tommies can connect with the past. Our Regiment's history is a living one, and you are part of it but it will require your active participation to be successful. We need to expand our community and promote our regiment so that we continue to remember those lost, and celebrate those that have, and continue to serve.

...and the Reimental Sergeant Major Concludes...

I want every new Tomahawk to understand that he/she is in a very, very extraordinary unit. of unmatched ability and lethality. As they, as the constituent battalions of the Regiment prepare for a post-Stryker era when our infantry will be – or already are – operating in an air, space and cyber environment hardly imagined before the invasion of Ukraine, the quality of Tomahawk and the preparation for kinetic and sub-op combat is higher than ever before.

And no one better prepared to own the future than a Tomahawk who is thoroughly grounded in who he/she is, who knows that they have at their back two centuries of Tomahawks who have met and triumphed over the challenges of their day as our modern Tomahawk will meet the challenges he/she will face today and tomorrow. I mean highly skilled, patriotic, resilient, focused men and women, women and men, who are demonstrably making a reality of our regimental motto: WE SERVE.

Dennis Zavodsky
Honorary Regimental Sergeant Major

That which binds us together Our abiding identity

For well over a century, the only distinctive symbol for our regiment in which many soldiers spent their entire lives was the numerals 2 and 3 above the crossed rifles of the US infantry. the 23rd, like the rest of the units of the Army below division, had no distinctive unit identity as this drumhead from 1918 shows with the Indianhead of the 2nd US Infantry Division,.

Then in June 1918 President Woodrow Wilson instructed the Secretary of War, Newton D Baker, to address the issue of design of medals. Colonel Robert Wyllie, then Chief of the Equipment Branch of the General Staff, was the action officer. He expanded the brief to include unit identity and created what later generations would call corporate branding.

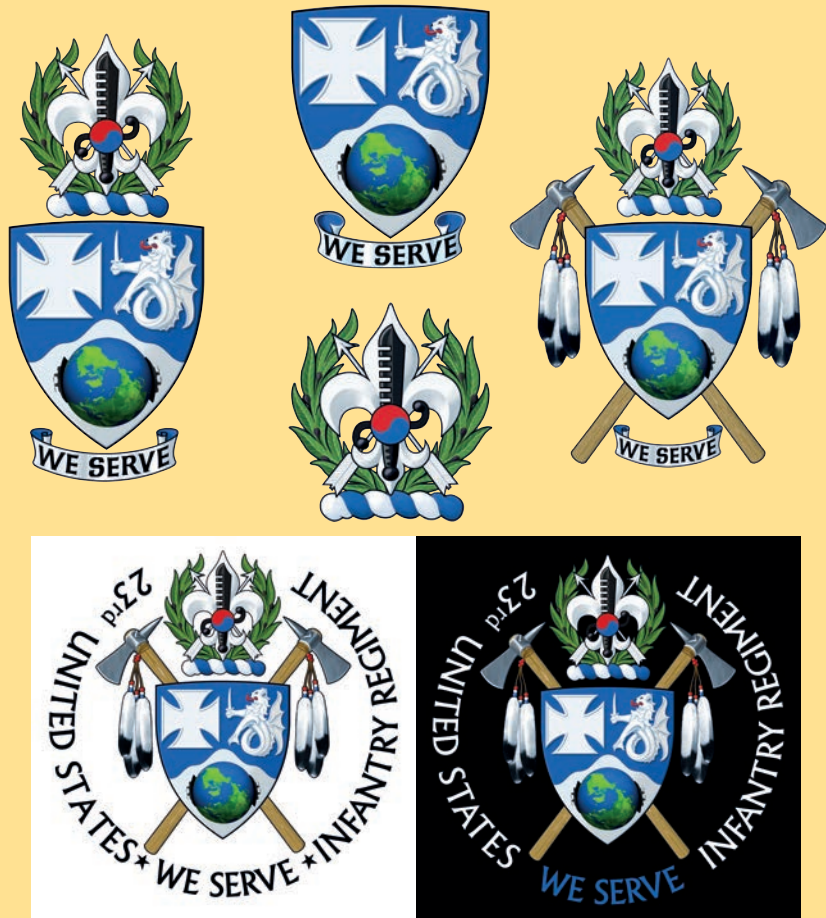


Backed by Secretary Baker, Wyllie had two strokes of genius which made it work. First, any proposed design had to adhere to the ancient rules of heraldry and be approved by the Quartermaster Corps (later the US Army Insistute of Heraldry in 1960) and his second stroke of genius was that the approved design must be capable of being reproduced on metal badges infilled with enamel for all ranks of a unit to wear on their uniforms.

Our Distinctive Unit Insignia (DUI), errantly but commonly called a crest, was one of the first products of the Baker-Wyllie initiative being granted in 1922, and our motto *We Serve* dates from that time as well. The written rules which govern what our DUI is composed up and how the elements all fit together was laid down then and reinforced by Regulation (see below). But how our arms are drawn is another matter as these examples from years past which reflect changing fashion.



Wikimedia takes up the story: ‘In 2017 responding to the deterioration in clarity of the drawn arms for the 23rd US Infantry Regiment over the years and the change of crest, the Regiment was gifted with digital re-drawings of their arms’. Why? To give everyone in the Regiment access to their heraldry to use for official and unofficial purposes, eg signage as well as, for example, sportswear.’ No longer is using our identity subject to authority or expense or bastardization. On Civvy Street this is called the democratization of good design.



All of these designs (with and without tomahawks) are available for reproduction by active duty and retired members of the Regiment and regimental/battalion/division associations as well as accoutrement suppliers. Just copy in pdf and use.

[https://www.heraldrywiki.com/heraldrywiki/index.php?title=23rd Infantry Regiment, US Army](https://www.heraldrywiki.com/heraldrywiki/index.php?title=23rd_Infantry_Regiment,_US_Army)
or
23rdinfantomahawksjournal.com
Description/Blazon

Blazon of the 23rd US Infantry Regiment

Shield

Party per chevron wavy Azure and Argent in dexter chief a cross pattée of the second in sinister chief a sea lion with sword in dexter paw of the like langued Gules in base a northern hemisphere with a transport in each ocean both sailing from east to west, all Proper.

Crest

On a wreath of the colors Argent and Azure a fleur-de-lis in front of two crossed arrows of the first surmounted palewise by a sword-breaker with seven barbs Sable charged at the hilt with a taeguk Proper all in front of and within an open laurel wreath Vert.

Motto

WE SERVE.

Symbolism

Shield

The shield is blue and white, the present and old Infantry colors. Civil War service is indicated by the white cross of the V Corps, and Philippine Insurrection service by the sea lion taken from the seal of Manila. The Mont Blanc operation of October 1918 in World War I is commemorated by the outline of the lower half of the shield. The 23d Infantry has the unique distinction of being the first American regiment to circumnavigate the globe and this accomplishment is indicated in the base of the shield.

Crest

The seven barbs of the sword-breaker (a medieval close combat weapon) and the red and blue taeguk upon its hilt are symbolic of the seven Presidential Unit Citations awarded to the unit in Europe during World War II and in the Korean War. The fleur-de-lis refers to the four awards of the French Croix de Guerre during World War I, three with palm, which are symbolized by the encircling laurel wreath. The arrows allude to participation in the Indian Wars.

Tomahawks

The use of the tomahawks has been identified with the regiment for well over half a century although they are not included in the official blazon (Distinctive Unit Insignia or DUI). In the redrawing of the arms with tomahawks, the added description is:

...the escutcheon surmounting two steelheaded tomahawks in Saltire dependent from the hardwood hafts below the heads thereof three leathern cords each threaded with three beads palewise Gules, Argent and Azure above a bald eagle's wing feathers all Proper.

As for the tomahawks themselves, the head of a tomahawk can be stone or iron/steel. In this case, 'steel-headed' is used, realistically bound to the wooden haft with leather cords. The red, white and blue beads allude to the national colors and the ethos of the American soldier, palewise is there for emphasis as tinctures are always described from dexter chief downwards, so the red one must be at the top, followed by the white and nethermost the blue.

Background

The coat of arms was originally approved on 4 May 1922. The original crest was cancelled and a new crest approved with symbolism revised on 28 March 1980. Tomahawks added 2017.

Tomahawks are us, so saith AR 870-5, chapter 6

Some months ago, the Regimental Historian and the Regimental Colonel's senior staff officer, both historians, were invited to give a series of seminars on the Regiment's history at Fort Carson. In the midst of waxing on about salients in France and Korea one question kept coming up time and again. 'Why are we called Tomahawks?' We did not know, so we set out to learn.

With its illustrious history surely the 23rd had a nickname from the beginning? Well, it is unlikely. Or, if so, it did not stick. After all, nicknames are given to people or organizations by other people or organizations and because for most of our existence we would have been the only infantry unit on any post in the west or Michigan or even in the Philippines, we know of no sobriquet with that sticking-power.

However, in October 1918 a nickname with some oomph suddenly appears in a field diary written during the latter stages of the push on Blanc Mont (which the white bulge on our coat of arms dating from the 1920s commemorates). As the chapter on the Great War relates: '...the 23rd had been 'shot up, depleted, exhausted.' Yet instead of being relieved they were ordered up and into the line again. 'As we were on our way back we passed through the 78th Division who were lined up on both sides of the road to see the "Famous 23rd Infantry" in review. Their band ripping out some real rag-time for our benefit.'

But was being 'Famous' a nickname of sufficient uniqueness to equal the 3rd Infantry's Old Guard a nickname given to it by General Winfield Scott or Brave Rifles of the 3rd Cavalry? Both nicknames ended up as official mottos but surely 'famous' was too generic and it is hardly unique.

As opposed to nicknames, many mottos were tied to a place or incident long banished from memory or they were too benign (We Serve comes to mind) and a lot of potential mottos did not benefit from being translated into Latin. After all, who would bear down on an enemy screaming *Noli Me Tangere* instead of *Don't you touch me!* To achieve official recognition a motto, to quote the relevant post war Army Regulation, has to express a direct association 'with some person, place, thing, event or function having particular significance to the unit' a nickname on the other hand, officially recognized or not, has to accurately describe what the speaker is speaking about.

So, given our half century taming the west, a record equalled by no other infantry regiment, we suspect the attribute chosen to best describe the 23rd was, and is, a user-maintained lethal weapon, fit for



*Regimental Colonel Hughes L Ash
28 October 1953 - 11 March 1954*

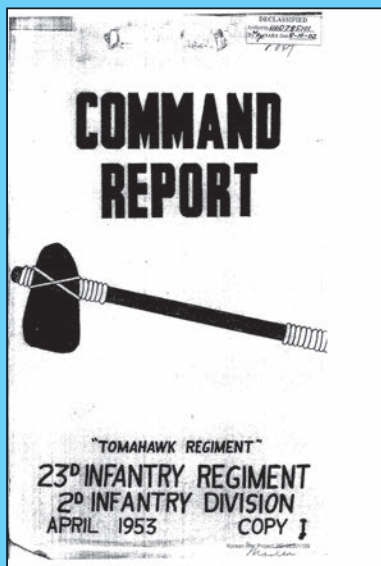
purpose. In other words: a tomahawk. And tomahawks are borne and maintained by real thugs, thinking thugs, yes, strong and fit thugs, yup.

Be that as it may, we started to call ourselves Tomahawks by the early 1950s and in a corporate make-over we rebranded our reports and all ranks in Alaska even wore it above the right pocket of their shirts and field jackets as the photo of Colonel Hughes L Ash, the Regimental Colonel c.1953-54 shows.

In short, Tomahawk worked then and works today. As far as we know no other US Army unit dares to use it. And our tomahawk has been worn on bandanas, jackets, bumper stickers, reports, walls, doors and painted on the sides of our warhorses as well. And, as far as the granting authority is concerned, where the TOMAHAWK goes, so goes the word: REGIMENT, meaning ALL OF US: a regiment's worth. And so the nickname TOMAHAWK REGIMENT was brought into existence from 1953-54 (See AR 870-5, chapter 6). It is official and that means it is officially the way in which Tomahawks and others can refer to any part of the 23rd and its personnel individually or all formations line abreast. It has served and serves us well.



Thanks to the Regimental Historian, Sergeant Neil Andrews, who wore the badge pictured right.



Frozen Private E-Nothing Andrews, Neil R, aged 18, C/4/23 Inf shortly before embarkation from Ft Richardson, Alaska, 1966. Note Tomahawk patch above his nametape.

Scotch Remain Our Regimental Accolade

An accolade is a special honor, an acknowledgement of merit uttered or written with meaning. A military accolade is shared 'password' generally known only to previous and current members of or from a unit with enough of a history and esprit de corps to transport the shared accolade from the irrelevant to a phrase redolent with meaning.

Our accolade has its roots in the Korean War, when the only major United Nations unit in the way of total communist victory over the whole peninsula was the 23rd Regiment and two companies of French infantry who stood alone against an estimated 30,000 Chinese and North Korean soldiers. General Matthew Ridgeway, new to the conflict, had but one option and that was to employ the 23rd to slow the onslaught, allowing the 8th Army and I Corps to retire and regroup in good order. The message came through that the 23rd was to remain in place by order of Scotch, General Ridgeway's nickname.

Then Colonel Freeman, the Regimental Commander, built a defensive perimeter among a ring of low hills overlooking Chipyeong-ni and for more than three days of brutal fighting in arctic weather the defenders, including our late lamented Regimental Sergeant Major, held their positions despite unbelievable odds. Everyone soon knew what had come over the radio and SCOTCH REMAIN became synonymous with standing fast and doing it head high.

Go to Youtube and see the films of Chipyeong-ni. The 23rd made real history then and our password, our accolade is our acknowledgement of true heroism which deserves to be remembered. So when you hear it exchanged think of your freezing predecessors and their true guts and determination which we hope, if called upon, to emulate. SCOTCH REMAIN.



*Regimental Colonel Paul Freeman,
1907-1988*



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

1st BATTALION, 23rd INFANTRY REGIMENT
JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD, WASHINGTON 99453
FORT CARSON, COLORADO 80922



09 November 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR Honorary Commander and Command Sergeant Major of the 23rd
Infantry Regiment, Board Members of the 23rd Infantry Regiment Tomahawk Association

SUBJECT: Recommendation for the Creation of an Accolade for the 23rd Infantry Regiment

A unit's identity and lineage are the accumulation of the people who serve in it, the challenges the unit endures, and the decisions that leaders make to shape its lasting legacy. The 23rd Infantry Regiment is no different. At moments long forgotten, the forerunners of our Regiment chose the *Tomahawk* as the official symbol of our service, along with *"We Serve"* as our guiding motto. Similarly, the features of the 23rd Infantry Regiment crest were specifically chosen as a roadmap of monumental achievement and equally monumental sacrifice.

To the extent that we have any influence to make such a recommendation, we humbly propose the addition of a new element of the Regimental lineage, a custom that honors our history and will survive the years with the permanence of our motto. We recommend the adoption of a 23rd Infantry Regiment Accolade.

An accolade is *"an expression of praise or admiration,"* a demonstration of esprit and élan. In the case of the 3d Cavalry Regiment's Accolade, it derived from the high praise that General Winfield Scott gave the 3d Cavalry following fighting at Contreras, Mexico in August of 1847. The Accolade we propose is a series of challenge and response calls shouted with the vigor and volume that only a Tomahawk Soldier can produce. Leaders in the 23rd Infantry Regiment would render this Accolade as a proclamation of collective pride during formations and parades, meetings and informal gatherings alike.

We feel it is important that the components of the Accolade relate to a defining moment in the Regiment's history. What better moment than the 1951 encirclement at Chipyong-Ni? In considering how to incorporate some aspect of the Chipyong-Ni battle into the form of an Accolade, we propose the following excerpt from a passage out of the definitive account of the 23rd Infantry at Chipyong-Ni.

Page 154 of *Leadership in the Crucible* by Kenneth E. Hamburger cites the message that the 23rd Regimental Combat Team's Operations Officer recorded on 12 February 1951:

"G-3 to Inspire 6. Our forces are executing a withdraw except for us. We are to remain. By order of Scotch."

This order effectively instructed Colonel Paul Freeman, "Inspire 6," and the 23rd Infantry to defend its current position at Chipyong-Ni, allowing the remainder of X Corps and 8th Army elements to withdraw south in the face of the advancing Chinese forces. The call sign, "Scotch," was Lieutenant General Matthew Ridgway, the 8th Army Commander.

Thus, as the centerpiece of the 23rd Infantry Regiment Accolade, we propose that the phrase "Scotch Remain" serve as an enduring tribute to the stalwart determination that 23rd Infantry Soldiers, including our Honorary Command Sergeant Major Charles Main, displayed at Chipyong-Ni.

The Accolade, performed at the position of ATTENTION while in formation or informally while standing with a raised tumbler of Basil Hayden's, is as follows:

Leader: "Prepare for the Regimental Accolade!"
Soldiers: "Prepare to Sound off!"

Leader: "What are the orders?"
Soldiers: "Scotch Remain!"

Leader: "Tomahawks!"
Soldiers: "We Serve!"

We present this Accolade to the Honorary Colonel, LTC Frederick Drew, USA Retired and the Honorary Command Sergeant Major, SFC Charles Main, USA Retired and recommend making a formal ratification to establish it as an official piece of the 23rd Infantry Regiment custom and lineage.

Thank you for your time and for your service as a Tomahawk! We Serve!

1st Battalion

ANDREW C. STEADMAN
LTC, IN
Commanding

MICHAEL A. LUTHER
CSM, IN
Command Sergeant Major

2nd Battalion

RYAN D. BARNETT
LTC, IN
Commanding

LANOE C. KIRKHAM
CSM, IN
Command Sergeant Major

4th Battalion

MATTHEW ALBERTUS
LTC, IN
Commanding

CALVIN J. OVERWAY JR.
CSM, IN
Command Sergeant Major



Leader:
PREPARE FOR THE REGIMENTAL ACCOLADE

Response:
PREPARE TO SOUND OFF

Leader:
WHAT ARE THE ORDERS?

Response:
SCOTCH REMAIN

Leader:
TOMAHAWKS!

Response by all:
WE SERVE!

The 23rd US Infantry Regimental Accolade is a very vocal expression of praise and admiration from one Tomahawk to another, a unique mark of pride and loyalty to the 23rd.

It recalls one of many notable and noble occurrences in the Regiment's proud history; the battle of Chipyeong-Ni, Korea in 1951, when Lieutenant General Matthew 'Scotch' Ridgway ordered the 23rd to remain in position, steadfast in the face of overwhelming enemy forces, allowing much of X Corps and the 8th Army to safely withdraw out of harm's way.

'We are to remain, by order of Scotch.'

The Great Punchbowls

The Regiment holds two large sterling silver punchbowls and cups: the Great Korean Bowl and the Great Vietnam Bowl.

The Great Korean Bowl

In 1956, the then regimental colonel (later General) Bernard Rogers published Regimental General Order 16 on 12 July 1956. This is it in its entirety:

HEADQUARTERS 23D INFANTRY
Fort Lewis, Washington
GENERAL ORDER NUMBER 16, 12 JULY 1956

In order to enhance the spirit of the 23d Infantry and establish a lasting symbol of it's history announcement is made that the silver bowl, conceived in Korea during 1951 will be hereafter called the Great Korea Bowl. It consists of the bowl itself, the ladle, the tray and twenty-five (25)



Lieutenant Colonel John Meyer, 1st Bn, 23rd Inf Commander, standing with the famous Tomahawk Korean Bowl at the 1st Battalion Ball, 13 June 2024. The idea of the Great Korean Silver Bowl dates from 1951 'as a fitting memorial to the gallant officers and men of the 23rd Infantry Regiment who gave their lives in combat in that conflict. It is said that the silver of which the bowl was constructed was obtained by smelting down thousands of sterling silver Combat Infantry Badges donated by the then members of the 23rd Infantry Regiment.' Its governance was set out in a Regimental General Order 16 of 12 July 1956 in an era when the very existence of regiments in the order of battle was under threat. It was signed off by the then colonel of the regiment, Lieutenant Colonel, later General, Bernard W Rogers.

cups. Twenty (20) belong to each of the Companies which compose the Regiment. Four (4) are for the use Regimental and Battalion Commanders. One (1) is for the use of a senior military guest if such be present. The use, safe-keeping and ceremonies of the Korea Bowl are outlined by separate publication which will be considered a directive and part of this General Order.

The Great Korea Bowl was conceived in the Autumn of 1951, in Korea, as a lasting and fitting memorial to the gallant officers and men of the Twenty Third Infantry Regiment who gave their lives in combat in that conflict. The silver of which the bowl is constructed was obtained by smelting down thousands of sterling silver Combat Infantry Badges donated by the then members of the 23d Infantry Regiment.

The Great Korea Bowl belongs to every man assigned to the Twenty Third Infantry Regiment and is emblematic of the spirit and sacrifice of all soldiers of the Regiment through its glorious history of battle in the defense of our nation. For this reason, its functions as a memorial to the gallant dead of the Regiment has been extended to include all those who have given their lives in battle in all wars in which the Twenty Third Infantry has participated.

At such times as the bowl is removed from its customary place of honor in the Regiment, it will be guarded by two enlisted men of the Regiment, and will remain so guarded until it is returned to its proper place. Since the bowl is normally accompanied by the Regimental and National Colors, it will normally be guarded by the Regimental Color Guard.

At suitable social functions, and upon order from the Regimental Commander, a ceremony utilizing the Korea Bowl and paying tribute to the honored dead of the Twenty Third Infantry will be conducted. All ceremonies of the Korea Bowl will commence at exactly one hour after the scheduled beginning of the social event.

The Great Vietnam Bowl

Then in 2013 the Fourth Battalion, inactivated since its time in Vietnam, was reborn at Fort Richardson, Alaska as a new Stryker Battalion.

Upon the call to deploy in 2013, the newly equipped and trained Fourth Battalion naturally planned to salute the next stage in its history by toasting its send-off.

The Battalion Commander at that time, LTC John Norris, naturally planned a Tomahawk punchbowl ceremony to mark their departure. But a problem developed. The Grand Korea Punchbowl was too big and impossibly expensive to insure the safe packing and sending of it and its cups from Fort Lewis, Washington in 'the lower 48' to Alaska for just one evening! Yet all the months of standing the battalion up and preparing for active operations deserved a proper send off and it would be disappointing if that send off did not match up to the effort or the meaning!



Then LTC John Norris and CSM Dennis Zavodsky partake in the first toast from the new Vietnam Punchbowl.

At that time two Vietnam-era Fourth Battalion Tomahawks (Staff Sergeants Doug Conn and Rick Lewis) headed up a group of Tomahawk veterans committed to supporting the active battalion. When they learned about Colonel Norris's frustrating problem, they decided to provide the Battalion with its own punchbowl. Time was running out before deployment, but Doug and Rick had no further to go than to Doug's wife, Wendy, whose knowledge of the silver market was and is extensive. Thanks to her contacts, they were soon able to lay their hands on a large and astonishingly beautiful sterling silver punchbowl. But a punchbowl is not of much use without cups, so Doug and Rick contacted other Vietnam veterans from the battalion and asked them to donate cups to complete the silver service.

What was the end result? Nothing less than an engraved silver punchbowl, two huge sterling silver serving trays, and 44 silver cups, each engraved with the name of a former Fourth Battalion soldier killed in action or a veteran who donated the money for the cup.

So when you visit the First or Fourth battalion's headquarters, their gleaming silver punchbowls, salvers and cups will be there for you to admire them unless, of course, they are in use!



The 23rd Infantry Regiment has a valorous and distinguished history of service to our nation. One of the most decorated infantry regiments in the Army, its achievements through the years have set an exceptionally high standard strengthened at every hand by the knowledge all Tomahawks have of their history.