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Colour plates by RON VOLSTAD

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Text by GORDON ROTTMAN

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US Army Airborne 1940-90

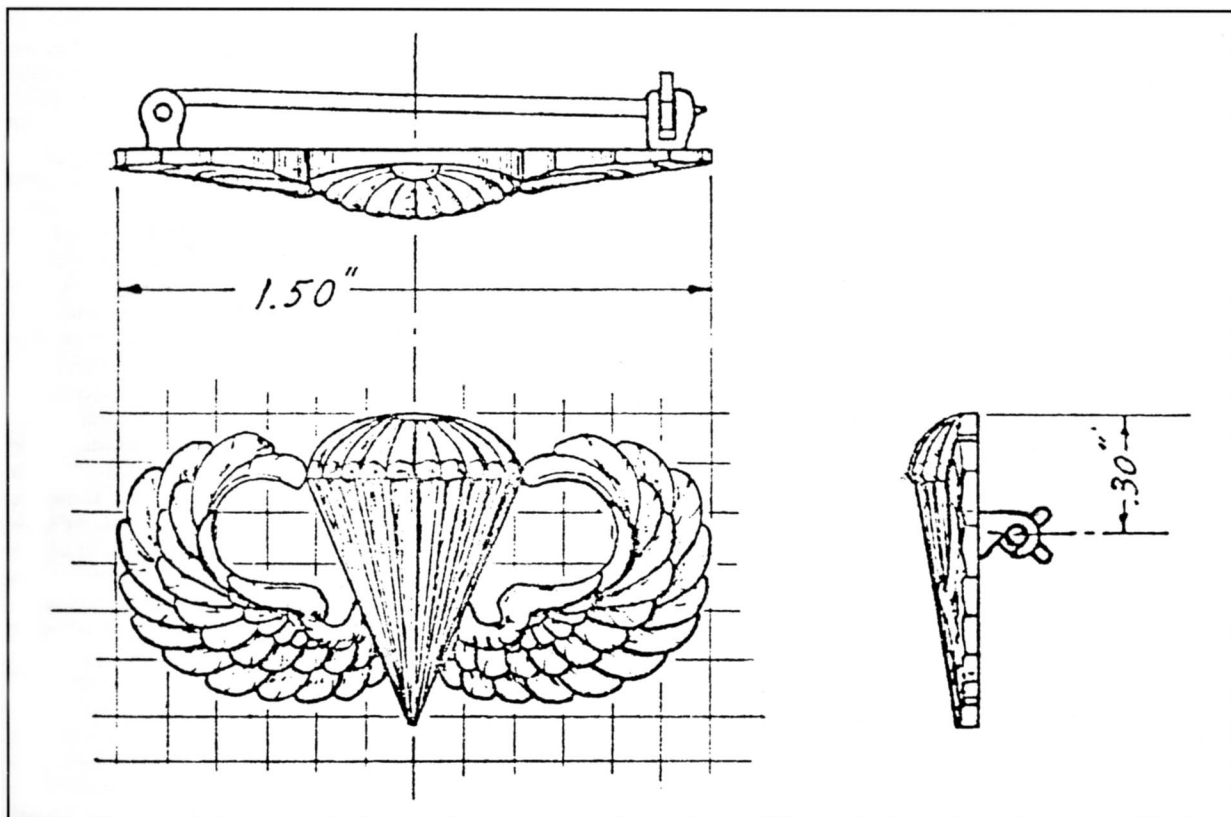
Introduction

The first fifty years of the US Army airborne arm is a story of continuing battles with the nation's enemies, of battles within the Army's hierarchy, of change, and of adaptation. If there is any single attribute the airborne soldier can claim as his most sterling, it is his uncanny ability to adapt—his flexibility. Be it on a confused battlefield deep behind enemy lines, in a structured exercise that begins to fall apart, in response to the demand for a different tactical concept or to the need for a new piece of equipment, a paratrooper will adapt: he will do *something*. The very nature of a paratrooper demands this ability to adapt. There is something in most men who are willing to take that extra step and volunteer for the airborne that sets them apart from other soldiers. This is not to say that other soldiers are inferior; but the extra effort it takes to be a paratrooper, the motivation and *esprit de corps* it develops within these units is something not to be taken lightly.

The very reason many countries retain airborne units is the

simple fact that they know that the kind of individuals they attract have the ability and willingness to take that extra step when the going becomes difficult, when an extra effort is needed to win the day. Few countries nowadays actually expect to employ their airborne units solely by parachute, but they do know that paratroopers have the flexibility and motivation to successfully accomplish their mission when others might falter. The fact that they have soldiers willing to throw their bodies, burdened with excessive equipment, out of a speeding aircraft on a moonless night is in itself worth the effort and expense of maintaining airborne units. Peacetime training, regardless of how much lip-service is paid to realism, is still training. Soldiers do get hurt and killed in training, but everyone knows it is all done with the priority on safety. Jumping from an aircraft in flight, and landing under a parachute with a heavy load on who knows what kind of terrain, is a conscious act requiring a soldier to control his

The first drawing of the parachutist badge by Bailey, Banks and Biddle Co., Philadelphia jewellers. The 501st Prcht. Bn. ordered 350 on 6 March 1941 for presentation on 15 March; officially approved on 10 March.



natural apprehension and fear far beyond what most soldiers are expected to endure. This form of stress and fear is not unlike that found in combat and familiarity with it will greatly aid a soldier in controlling it once engaged in actual combat. Airborne training provides a country with a highly motivated, aggressive, physically fit soldier with some degree of pre-exposure to the stress of combat, backed by a unit boasting the pride and prestige so necessary to maintain unit cohesion in the rigours of battle. It creates a soldier with the ability and desire to accomplish the mission against challenging odds, with the required flexibility and independence of action.

Score of books chronicle the battles and exploits of the airborne. In an effort not to provide just another such book, this author will examine the evolution of the airborne's unit structure; how they adapted to the changes in military doctrine, tactics, equipment, and the enemies they fought. It will also follow the confused genealogy of the many airborne units—how they emerged, consolidated, and expanded; where they served, and what became of them.

Abbreviations used:

Units:

Det	Detachment	Sdn	Squadron
Plat	Platoon	BG	Battle Group
Co	Company	Bde	Brigade
Bty	Battery	Gp	Group
Trp	Troop	Regt	Regiment
Bn	Battalion	Div	Division

Branches/Misc.:

AAA	Anti-aircraft Arty.	Lt	Light
Abn	Airborne	LRRP	Long Range Recon. Patrol
ADA	Air Defense Arty.	Maint	Maintenance
AIB	Abn. Inf. Bn.	Mech or M	Mechanized
AIR	Abn. Inf. Regt.	MI	Military Intelligence
ARCT	Abn. Regimental Combat Team	MP	Military Police
Armd or AR	Armored or Armor	Opns or ops	Operations
ARNG	Army National Guard	Ord	Ordnance (maintenance)
Arty	Artillery	Prcht	Parachute
ASA	Army Security Agency	Pfdr	Pathfinder
AT	Anti-tank	PFAB	Prcht. Field Arty. Bn.
Avn	Aviation	PIB	Prcht. Inf. Bn.
CA	Civil Affairs (military government)	PIR	Prcht. Inf. Regt.
Cav	Cavalry	Prov	Provisional (temporary)
Engr	Engineer	Psyops	Psychological Operations
FA	Field Artillery	QM	Quartermaster (supply)
GFAB	Glider Field Arty. Bn.	Recon	Reconnaissance
GIR	Glider Inf. Regt.	Spl	Special
HHB	Headquarters & Headquarters Bty.	S&S	Supply & Service
HHC	Headquarters & Headquarters Co.	S&T	Supply & Transport
HHD	Headquarters & Headquarters Det.	Sig	Signal
HHT	Headquarters & Headquarters Trp.	Spt	Support
HQ	Headquarters	Svc	Service
Inf	Infantry	TOE	Table of Organization & Equipment

The Early Days

The first proposal for an airborne assault came from none other than Benjamin Franklin. Influenced by the recent Montgolfier hot air balloon, he proposed that a large number of balloons, loaded with soldiers, be sent into an enemy's countryside to reap havoc while his main army was deployed at the front. He reasoned that no country could afford to defend the whole of the countryside while also maintaining a field army.

Col. Billy Mitchell, commander of US aviation units in France, proposed the first airborne assault in Oct. 1918. The 1st Division was to be trained (involuntarily) to parachute from heavy bombers (capable of carrying a squad apiece) and extensively armed with machine guns. Units were to be parachuted behind German lines (one plan included taking the city of Metz) in support of the planned spring 1919 offensive, to establish strongpoints as bases of operation, and to attack the enemy's rear in support of general frontal attacks. Col. Mitchell had sufficient vision to propose supplying these units by air-drop, and using attack aircraft to deny the Germans use of the roads to attack the parachute units while they fortified their bases. The plan was seriously studied and sufficient bombers were expected to be available. The logistics of the operation would have been excessive due to the

Notes on US Army designation practices

(1) Troops and batteries are company-sized, squadrons are battalion-sized. Infantry regiments were composed of three organic battalions. Detachments are generally platoon or smaller sized, but administratively function as a company. Brigades and groups have several attached battalions and smaller units.

(2) Prior to 1957 tube artillery was under the Field Arty. and anti-aircraft artillery under the Coast Arty. From 1957 to 1969 tube and air defence artillery were consolidated into a single Artillery branch. In 1969 they were again split with tube artillery under the Field Arty. and air defence systems under the Air Defense Artillery.

(3) The Combat Arms Regimental System (CARS) was adopted in 1957 to continue regimental lineages when the regiment was replaced by battle groups from 1957 to 1964, in turn replaced by battalions/brigades in 1964. CARS battle groups and the later battalions carried the lineages of the original regimental companies and not their battalions. Up to 15 battle groups/battalions and/or separate companies could be established under a parent regiment. CARS units are identified by, e.g. 1-506th Inf (1st Bn., 506th Inf.). There was no regimental headquarters and units belonging to the same parent regiment could be assigned to different divisions/brigades. In 1983 CARS began to be replaced by the Army Regimental System (ARS). Similar to CARS with battalions and separate companies carrying the lineage of pre-1957 companies, it establishes parent regiments, permitting soldiers to serve within the same units overseas and in the states. ARS units are identified, e.g. 1/506 Inf. ARS regimental headquarters are strictly administrative and are not assigned to tactical formations nor have tactical control over units. Battalions organic to the pre-1957 regiments are identified in the same manner, e.g. 1/506 PIR.



problems of training thousands of troops and acquiring sufficient parachutes in time. Fortunately for the 1st Division the war ended the following month. But, none the less, it was proved a valid concept 22 years later by the very army that Mitchell's 'wild' proposal was aimed against.

The airborne torch was next taken up by the Soviet Union (1931), Germany (1937), France (1937), and Italy (1938). Other countries were to dabble with parachute troops in the pre-war years, but it was Germany and the USSR that undertook the most ambitious efforts. Great Britain formed her first parachute units in 1940, these being special operations units; she did not establish tactical units until late 1941. These were followed by a massive airborne establishment to include the formation of Allied special ops and tactical units.

Despite involvement with developing emergency parachutes for aviators since 1918, the US Army's first tactical experiment was conducted on 29 April 1928 at Kelly Field on the outskirts of San Antonio, Tex., under the auspices of none other than Brig. Gen. Billy Mitchell. Three volunteers from the 2d Division, stationed at nearby Ft Sam Houston, parachuted from a bomber using manually activated parachutes, and set up and fired a machine gun as part of a demonstration. Regrettably, no further experimentation was conducted.

The Army did experiment with air-landing troops, however. In 1931 an artillery battery was air lifted across the isthmus of Panama. In 1932, during manoeuvres at Ft DuPont, Del., a small infantry element was air-landed behind the opposing force's lines. The following year, again in Panama, an entire artillery battalion was air-lifted during an exercise.

No further development took place until May 1939 when the Chief of Infantry proposed the formation of a small

Members of the 501st Prcht. Bn. at Ft Benning, 1941 wearing aviation coveralls, Riddell helmets, leather neck protector bib, and T-4 parachutes. Most have their leg cuffs taped or tied. (M.D. Boland via Awbrey Norris)

detachment of 'air infantry'. When initial co-ordination was attempted with the Air Corps to obtain the necessary aircraft, that branch proposed that airborne troops should be under their control and designated 'Air Grenadiers'. The Corps of Engineers likewise maintained that, since the airborne troops would principally be employed as saboteurs and demolition specialists in their behind-the-lines operations, they should come under Engineer authority. In late 1939, after a conference involving the three concerned branches, the infantry received control of air infantry and air-landing troops development.

On 2 Jan. 1940 the Chief of Infantry was directed by the War Department to study the practicability of air infantry and the air transport requirements of infantry division ground troops. A plan was soon proposed to form a test platoon under the Infantry Board, and was approved in April. Co-ordination with the Air Corps was ordered and what came to be known as the Airborne Effort began.

The 1940 German successes with parachute, glider, and air-landed troops in the Low Countries gave an added emphasis to the programme. The accomplishments of these small units were a key factor in increased interest, and also proved the concepts valid. The tactics employed by the Germans were to initially influence the development of the Army's own airborne doctrine. The 2d Division was directed to test procedures for the air-landing of troops in Sept. 1940. The study focused on a reinforced combined arms infantry battalion for



Members of the 501st Prcht. Bn., offering a good view of the T-4 backpack, board a C-47 at Lawson Field, Ft Benning, 1941. (M.D. Boland via Awbrey Norris)

possible service as an air-landed task force. Experimental test parachute drops of personnel and supplies were also conducted at Lawson Field, Ft Benning, Ga.

The activation of the Army's first parachute unit, the **Parachute Test Platoon**, was authorized on 25 June 1940. It was formed on 1 July at Ft Benning, home of the Infantry School, from volunteers from the 29th Inf. Regt. Forty-eight men were selected from the 200 who volunteered. Training began in earnest with the platoon making its first jumps on 16 Aug.; the first mass jump was executed on the 29th.

In the meantime the War Department G-3 Section first recommended that the project be placed directly under its control, and later that it be placed under the Air Corps. General Headquarters (GHQ) maintained that the primary mission of airborne troops was ground combat, and that air transport was merely a means of entry onto the battlefield. Also discussed was where the project should be based, with recommendations ranging from North Carolina to Texas to California. After prolonged discussion the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff directed that the project remain under the Chief of Infantry at Ft Benning.

On 16 Sept. 1940 the War Department activated the 1st Prcht. Bn. at Ft Benning, redesignating it the **501st Prcht. Bn.** on 1 Oct. to place its designation in line with the numbering system then adopted by GHQ. The members of the Test Platoon were absorbed into the new unit, and the parachute project was rapidly expanded with improved training facilities and new drop zones. In order to more effectively plan and execute the continued expansion of the Airborne Effort, and to co-ordinate training, a controlling

agency was needed to take the burden off the Chief of Infantry. The **Provisional Prcht. Group** was formed on 25 Feb. 1941, not as a tactical headquarters, but to provide cadres for new units, prepare training literature, study unit organization, and develop tactical doctrine. The still understrength 501st Prcht. Bn. was further depleted to provide the cadre for the **502d Prcht. Bn.** activated on 1 July 1941.

Problems had arisen with the quality of volunteers, and the 'wash-out' rate was excessive. Up to this time volunteers were obtained from replacement training centres, but authorization was given to recruit directly from the 8th and 9th Inf. Divs; this greatly eased the manning problems, and both existing battalions were brought up to strength. The parachutists, previously trained as infantrymen or in other specialties, were instructed in parachute packing and repair and all aspects of jumping, followed by tactical training up through battalion level. The units' training programmes were often disrupted, however, by requests for demonstrations and participation in manoeuvres. Throughout this period the units were discouragingly short of parachutes, the manufacturers being unable to keep pace with even the Air Corps' requirement.

The other component of the Army's Airborne Effort were aid-landing troops¹. This itself was divided into two elements, dedicated air-landing units and conventional units trained in an air-landing rôle. The Air Corps began experiments with gliders in July 1941, and requirements were issued for cargo gliders capable of carrying heavier and larger loads. Requirements were also established for new transport aircraft. Much of this effort was restricted due to a severe shortage of gliders and transports, emphasis being placed on bombers and fighters. These deficiencies were really never corrected and shortages continued due to the unforeseen needs for transports, and to excessive losses of gliders both in training and operationally.

The first dedicated air-landing unit, **550th Abn. Inf. Bn.**, was activated at Howard Field, Panama Canal Zone, on 1 July 1941. Reinforced by Co. C, 501st Prcht. Bn., the unit conducted extensive training and developed its air-landing skills using Air Corps transports. The unit also doubled as part of the Canal's defence force. The second such unit, **88th Abn. Inf. Bn.**, was activated on 10 Oct. 1941 at Ft Benning. This battalion was strictly an experimental agency under the Chief of Infantry, tasked with determining aircraft load planning, air-landing unit equipment needs, organization, tactical doctrine, and training requirements.

The **503d Prcht. Inf. Bn.** (PIB—the 501st and 502d did not receive the Infantry designation) was activated on 22 Aug. 1941; this was followed by the **504th PIB** on 5 October. At the time the 501st Bn. was formed the prevalent concept of parachute unit employment was that they would never be committed in larger than battalion-sized forces. No provision was made for higher headquarters and they were organized as separate GHQ battalions. Events in Crete demonstrated otherwise, and it was not long before consideration was given to larger parachute units. The group was deemed inadequate due to its small administrative headquarters and lack of support elements. In late 1941 it was decided that a regimental structure should be adopted, since it was a term

¹ At this point a clarification of then current Army terms is required. 'Airborne' was an all-inclusive term referring not only to parachute units, but to air-landing units as well—units trained, organized, and equipped for transport in Air Corps aircraft and assault landing. Later, glider units were also included under airborne.

familiar to infantrymen, and it further ensured that with the formation of every three battalions another headquarters would be added. At this same time a parachute force, similar to the Armored Force which was responsible for training and fielding armored units and their related support units, was suggested to control parachute units. The Air Corps made yet another bid to control the airborne forces by recommending they be placed under the Air Support Command. This was countered by the Chief of Infantry: the proposal still offered no tactical headquarters, and the airborne would be overshadowed by other interests. The counter-proposal envisioned several parachute divisions each composed of three parachute regiments and an organic air transport group. This was to be the first proposal for such a large formation and a hint of things to come. War was declared on 8 Dec. 1941.

World War II

On 30 Jan. 1942 the War Department directed that four parachute regiments be formed using the assets of the existing battalions; this was accomplished between February and May 1942. All units were understrength and recruiting and training efforts were intensified.

In the meantime a higher headquarters was needed to administer the growing Airborne Effort and provide the required unity of command. Previously, parachute units completed their unit training under the Prov. Prcht. Gp., and

were transferred to GHQ control for further preparation for combat. The units' unique training requirements demanded their control by a unified command in order to effectively provide for their advanced training. The Prov. Prcht. Gp. was expanded and redesignated the **Airborne Command** on 21 March 1942. Existing parachute and air-landing units were placed under its control, and most later units also assigned. It was to oversee their activation, training, and preparation for combat, to co-ordinate transports and gliders allocated by the Army Air Forces (AAF), and to assist non-airborne units with air-landing (by transports) training. Parachute training was retained under the Infantry School, and glider pilot training conducted at AAF bases in Missouri, Nebraska, and North Carolina. On 9 April the Abn. Command was moved to Ft Bragg, NC. On 6 May the Parachute School, which remained at Ft Benning, was activated under the Abn. Command along with its 1st Prcht. Training Regiment. The first parachute field artillery battalion, 456th PFAB, was activated on 24 Sept. 1942 using the assets of the Prcht. Test Battery, itself formed a few months earlier. The 456th itself was to provide cadres for other early PFABs.

Serious consideration for the formation of airborne divisions began when initial plans were laid for the invasion of Europe in April 1943 (logistical requirements and other events delayed this for over a year). The British had formed

Members of the 2d Bn., 503d Prcht. Inf. Regt., don 'chutes in Berkshire, England, Sept. 1942. All wear aviation coveralls and olive drab garrison caps with light blue piping, but without parachute patches. (US Army via Allen Shoppe)



their first airborne division in late 1941 and the US Army went to them for advice. The British division was roughly modelled on the German equivalent, but with distinct differences. A formally organized combined arms airborne division, comprised of both parachute and glider units, was recommended. Army Ground Forces (AGF, replaced GHQ in March 1942) thought of the airborne division as a task force formed from separate parachute and air-landing units rather than a true division. In July 1942, after consultation with the Abn. Command, AGF reversed its view and recommended the formation of two airborne divisions, but maintained that they should be small and composed of very limited support elements.

The airborne division was a 'miniature division' composed of only about 8,400 troops as opposed to an infantry division's 15,000 plus. Likewise the PIRs had just under 2,000 men and the GIRs about 1,600, while a standard infantry regiment fielded 3,000 troops. Though the TOE called for one parachute and two glider regiments, the mix of regiments could be varied. The airborne division contained all the normal support elements, but they were considerably smaller and more lightly equipped than an infantry division with, for example, only 650 light vehicles and trailers as opposed to

2,000. The fact that they were called divisions caused a misconception of their true capabilities, which, when coupled with their airborne mobility, created the impression of a highly mobile ground force. When committed to prolonged ground combat they proved incapable of occupying and holding sectors of the size expected of infantry divisions. Their ability to sustain themselves in prolonged combat was also limited.

The PIR was composed of three battalions of three rifle companies each plus a service company. The companies had one weapons and three rifle platoons. Originally the rifle platoons had only two squads, but this was increased to three as in other infantry units. The GIR was similarly organized, but had only two battalions. Both types of battalion HHCs had an 81mm mortar platoon, while the glider battalions also possessed an anti-tank gun platoon. The division's 37mm anti-tank guns were eventually replaced by 57mm weapons, and later by the similar British 6-pounder (which was easier to load into gliders). Like the infantry regiments, glider FA battalions were smaller than their parachute counterparts, though both fielded 12 howitzers. The below units not designated Parachute or Glider were designated Airborne and possessed air-landing and glider capabilities only.

World War II Airborne Divisions, 1942-45

Airborne Division	Inf. Regts ¹		Division Artillery ¹		AA Bn.	Engr. Bn.	Sig. Co.	Ord. Co.	Qm Co.	Med. Co.	Prcht. Maint. Co.
	Prcht.	Glider	Prcht. Bns.	Glider Bns.							
11th	511	187,188	457	674,675	152	127	511	711	408	221	11
	188,511	187	457,674	472,675							
13th	513 ²	189,190									
	515	88,326	458	676,677	153	129	513	713	409	222	13
	515,517	326	458,460	676,677							
15th (“Ghost” division, planned in 1943, but never formed due to manpower constraints.)	545	191,192	459	678,679	154	137	515	715	410	223	15
17th	517(513 ³)	193,194	466	680,681	155	139	517	717	411	224	17
	507,513	194	464,466	680,681							
82d	504,505 ⁴	325,326	376,456	319 ⁵ , 320 ⁵	80	307	82	782	407	307	82
101st	502	327,401	377	321,907	81	326	101	801	426	326	101
	502,506	327	377,463	312,907							
1st Abn	517,1/551	550 Bn	460,463	602	—	596 Co, 887 Co	512	Det, 3 Co	334	676	—
Task Force	509 Bn, FSSF ⁶ , 2 BR Indep Para Bde Gp ⁷ Misc Units: 645 TD Bn, AT Co/442 Inf, A/2 & A/83 Chem Mort Bns										

¹ The mix of assigned PIRs and GIRs was changed and an additional PFAB added to most divisions in March 1945. The 11th Abn. Div. made the change in July 1944.

² 13th Abn. Div. went through two regimental assignment changes, Dec. 1943/March 1944 and March 1945.

³ 517th PIR was replaced by the 513th PIR in March 1944.

⁴ 82d Abn. Div. was under a special four regiment TOE from Feb. 1943.

⁵ Equipped with 105 mm M3 pack howitzers. All other FA battalions had 75 mm M1 pack howitzers.

⁶ 1st Special Service Force (FSSF) was composed of 1st, 2d & 3d Regts. (2 bns. each) & Force Service Bn.

⁷ 2nd British Independent Parachute Brigade Group was attached to 1ATF from July to Aug. 1944 when replaced by FSSF. The brigade was composed of 4, 5 & 6 Para Bns., 64 Field Bty. (arty.), 300 Airlanding AT Bty., 2 Para Sdn. (engr.), 1 Indep. Glider Pilot Sqn., 1 Co. (became 751 Co.) Royal Army Svc. Corps, 127 Para Field Ambu., 2 Para Bde. Gp. Workshop, 2 Para Bde. Gp. Signals. NOTE: British squadrons are company-sized.



Airborne Division 1942

HHC, Division <i>Prcht. Inf. Regt.</i>	Glider FA Bn. 75mm Pack (× 2)
HHC Prcht. Inf. Bn. (× 3)	HQ, HQ & Service Bty. Glider Howitzer Bty. (× 2)
HHC Prcht. Rifle Co. (× 3)	<i>Division Troops</i>
Prcht Service Co.	AA Bn.
<i>Glider Inf. Regt.</i> (× 2)	HHB
HHC	AT Bty. 37mm AT Gun (× 3)
Glider Inf. Bn. (× 2)	AA MG Bty. (× 3)
HHC	Engineer Bn.
Glider Rifle Co. (× 3)	HQ, HQ & Service Co.
Glider Service Co.	Glider Engineer Co. (× 2)
<i>Division Artillery</i>	Prcht. Engineer Co.
HHB, Div. Arty.	Signal Co.
Prcht. FA Bn. 75mm Pack	Maint. Co.
HQ, HQ & Service Bty.	QM Co.
Prcht. Howitzer Bty. (× 3)	Prcht. Maint. Co.
Prcht. AA & AT Bty.	Medical Co.
	MP Plat.

The Abn. Command continued to activate units at a rapid pace through 1942–43 and training facilities were greatly expanded. This including the opening of a new glider training base at Laurinburg-Maxton, NC, in Nov. 1942 and the massive Camp Mackall, NC complex, designed specifically for airborne units, in Feb. 1943. On 4 April the Abn. Command

A 2d Bn., 503d Prcht. Inf. Regt. jumpmaster checks equipment prior to a training jump in Berkshire, England, Oct. 1942. All wear the M1942 parachutist uniform and T-5 parachute. Note the camouflage painted helmets. (US Army via Allen Shoppe)

relocated to the new camp. Airborne units participated in manoeuvres and air-landing training was conducted for non-airborne divisions.

The 2/509th PIR and 82d Abn. Div. were to suffer a number of airborne disasters in North Africa and Sicily in late 1942 and 1943. These failures caused Gen. Eisenhower to doubt the validity of the airborne division, and he recommended that airborne units be no larger than combined arms regimental combat teams. AGF began to plan for airborne units of only battalion size (AGF had earlier proposed they be converted to light infantry divisions). The future existence of airborne divisions was in doubt. In the fall of 1943 the Swing Board was convened to decide the fate of the divisions. Poor operational planning, even poorer troop carrier unit training, and higher commanders' piecemeal employment of the airborne forces were determined to be the principal causes of the airborne's poor performance. Gen. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, was in favour of retaining the ill-starred formations, but directed that improvements be made in their training and employment. A test of the airborne divisions was executed at Ft Bragg with the 11th Abn. pitted against the defending 17th. The December exercise was a resounding success and the airborne divisions' opponents were convinced of their viability. AGF revoked its recommendations for the divisions'



A 1st Bn., 542d Prcht. Inf. Regt. technician 4th grade in Panama, 1943. The jumping oval is thought to be black with a light yellow border. (82d Abn. Div. Ass'n.)

disbandment, and the schedule of activating, training, and committing airborne divisions was retained.

On 1 March 1944 the Abn. Command was reorganized and redesignated the **Airborne Center** and tasked with operating Camp Mackall; training all attached airborne units; acting as a liaison agency between the Troop Carrier Command, AAF and AGF; and developing airborne organization, doctrine and tactics. The Parachute School was relieved from the Center and placed under the Replacement and School Command. The Abn. Center also provided training detachments to the AAF's I Troop Carrier Command, airborne demonstration teams, and theatres of operations detachments—these last were a critical link between the Abn. Center and the combat units deployed in the theatres of operations, enabling feedback from the field as to organizational, tactical, and equipment needs.

Gliders were in short supply throughout the war. Sufficient gliders were not available for training, since many were shipped directly to England to await the arrival of units. Improved models were developed, but the Waco CG-4A remained the principal model; a few British-built types were acquired to help alleviate shortages. Double and triple glider tows were successfully tested, and parachute jumps were even made from gliders.

The 1942 airborne division proved to be ill-suited for sustained ground combat operations. It developed in a direction opposite from that originally envisioned by AGF, and in Dec. 1943 it was recommended that it be increased almost to the size of a standard infantry division. AGF opposed the idea, but the realities of the European battlefield prevailed, and a new TOE was approved in Dec. 1944. In actuality the 82d and 101st were already organized under this concept, with the former under a special augmented TOE since Feb. 1943, though they still lacked sufficient manpower. Unique to the 82d was that its GFABs were equipped with 105mm howitzers rather than the 75mm models of all other GFABs and PFABs. The four divisions in Europe were to reorganize effective 1 March 1945, but the 11th in the Pacific remained under the old TOE.

Major changes included: two rather than one PIR and one rather than two GIRs; addition of a second PFAB (the original second GFAB was retained, providing the division with a fourth general support battalion); the AT and AA battery was deleted from the PFAB; a third infantry battalion added to the GIR; conversion of the engineer battalion's Company B to parachute; and addition of a divisional recon. platoon. An FA battalion was aligned with each regiment to form regimental combat teams (though regiments and FA battalions had been commonly paired previously), also augmented by other divisional units. Firepower was greatly increased, and the division was enlarged to almost 13,000 troops—the PIRs with over 2,300 and the GIR with almost 3,000.

The following regiments and battalions are identified by their 1945 or final designation. The movements of units assigned to airborne divisions are described under those divisions. Many of these units were attached to airborne divisions for prolonged periods, and were sometimes considered a component; others were re-assigned to different divisions, and still others remained separate. Most units inactivated in the States in 1945–46 were at zero strength, the troops previously having been returned, and only their colours returned for inactivation.

Parachute infantry units 1942-45

188th PIR Activated on 25 Feb. 1943 at Camp Mackall as the 188th GIR and assigned to the 11th Abn. Div. Moved to Camp Polk, La., in Jan. 1944. Arrived in New Guinea in June and moved to Leyte in November. Redesignated 188th PIR on 20 July 1944 on Luzon. No combat jumps.

501st PIR On 15 Feb. 1942 the 501st Prcht. Bn. was redesignated 1/501st PIR at Ft Benning and later moved to the Panama Canal Zone. Sent to Australia (minus Co. C, see 551st PIR) in Oct. 1942 where it linked up with the 503d PIR and its assets used to form a new 2/503d PIR in Nov. Remainder of the regiment and a new 1st Bn. were activated in November at Camp Toccoa, Ga.; for all practical purposes this was a new unit. Sent to Ft Benning, then Camp Mackall in early 1943. Departed for England in Jan. 1944 and attached to 101st Abn. Div. in May until end of war. Combat jumps on 6 June 1944 in Normandy and 17 Sept. 1944 at Nijmegen, Holland. Relieved from the 101st in May and inactivated in Germany on 20 Aug. 1945 with the personnel going to the 327th GIR and 506th PIR.

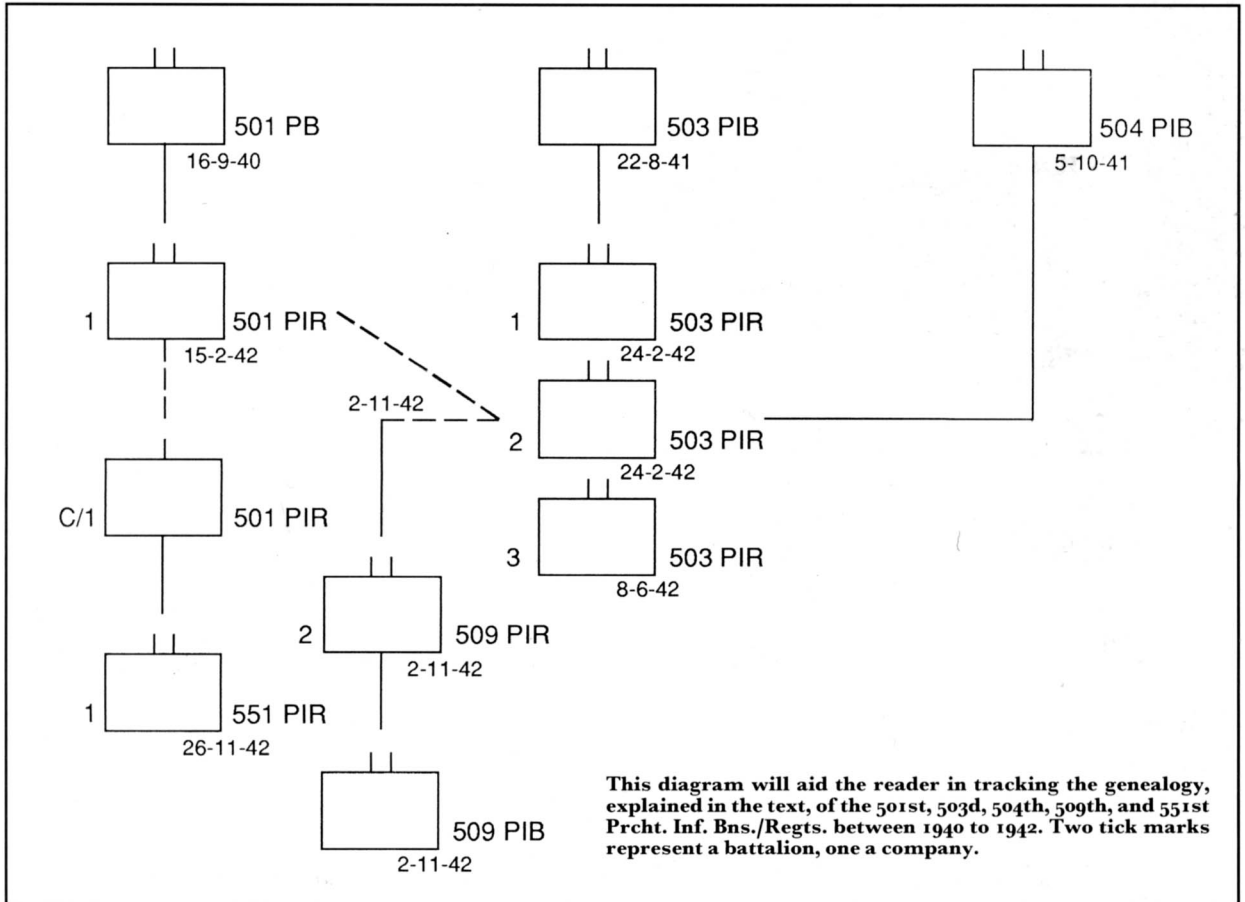
502d PIR 502d Prcht. Bn. redesignated 1/502d PIR on 24 Feb. 1942 and the rest of the regiment activated on 2 March at Ft Benning. Assigned to 101st Abn. Div. in Aug. 1942 and relocated to Ft Bragg. Combat jumps on 6th June 1944 in Normandy and 17 Sept. 1944 at Nijmegen, Holland.

503d PIR 503d and 504th PIBs were redesignated 1st and 2d Bns., 503d PIR respectively on 24 Feb. 1942 at Ft Benning. Headquarters activated in March and the unit moved to Ft

Bragg. Its 3d Bn. was activated in June. In June 1942 the 2/503d PIR departed for England (see 509th PIB). The bulk of the regiment departed for Australia in October. There a new 2d Bn. was formed using 1/501st PIR on 2 Nov. Deployed to New Guinea in Aug. 1943 and subsequently fought on New Guinea, Noemfoor, Leyte, Mindoro, Corregidor, and Negros Islands. The 462d PFAB (formed on 16 June 1943 at Camp Mackall) was attached to the 503d in July 1944 to form the 503d Regimental Combat Team. The commander of the 11th Abn. Div. wished the 503d to be incorporated into the division, but Gen. MacArthur preferred to retain it for special independent operations. Combat jumps on 5 Sept. 1943 at Nadzab, New Guinea, with a troop of 2/4 Field Regt. Australian Arty.; 3 July 1944 (HHC and 1st Bn.) on Noemfoor (3d Bn. dropped the next day); and 16 Feb. 1945 on Corregidor with one battery of the 462d PFAB (minus 1st Bn., which sea-landed the next day). Returned to Camp Anza, Calif., and inactivated on 23 Dec. 1945.

504th PIR Activated at Ft Benning on 1 May 1942 under the four-regiment plan. Assigned to 82d Abn. Div. in Aug. 1943. Detached from the 82d, along with the 376th and 456th PFABs, from Nov. 1943 and remained in Italy until April 1944 when it moved to England and rejoined the division. Combat jumps on 10 July 1944 at Gela, Sicily; 14 Sept. 1944 at Salerno, Italy (1st and 2d Bns. plus Co. C, 307th Engr. Bn.); and 17 Sept. 1944 at Nijmegen, Holland.

505th PIR Activated at Ft Benning on 6 July 1942. Assigned to the 82d in Feb. 1943, to replace the 326th GIR, and moved



This diagram will aid the reader in tracking the genealogy, explained in the text, of the 501st, 503d, 504th, 509th, and 551st Prcht. Inf. Bns./Regts. between 1940 to 1942. Two tick marks represent a battalion, one a company.



The 504th Prcht. Inf. Regt. boxing champion poses before a C-46 at Ft Bragg, 1943. A gas mask bag is on his left thigh. (82d Abn. Div. Ass'n.)

to Ft Bragg. Combat jumps on 9 July 1944 at Gela, Sicily (plus 3/504th PIR, 456th PFAB and Co. B 307th Engr. Bn.); 14 Sept. 1944 at Salerno, Italy; 6 June 1944 in Normandy; and 17 Sept. 1944 at Nijmegen, Holland.

506th PIR Activated at Camp Toombs, Ga. (later renamed Camp Toccoa), on 20 July 1942. Moved to Ft Benning in Dec. 1942 and to Camp Mackall in Feb. 1943. Attached to 101st in June 1943 and relocated several times prior to departing for England in Sept. 1943. Assigned to 101st in March 1945 and inactivated at Auxerre, France, on 30 Nov. 1945. Combat jumps on 6th June 1944 in Normandy and 17 Sept. 1944 at Nijmegen, Holland.

507th PIR Activated at Ft Benning on 20 July 1942. Relocated several times prior to departing for England in Nov. 1943. Attached to 82d in Jan. 1944, relieved and attached to 17th Abn. Div. in Aug. 1944. Assigned to 17th in March 1945. Combat jumps on 6 June 1944 in Normandy and 24 March 1945 at Wesel, Germany. Returned to Camp Myles Standish, Mass. on 16 Sept. 1945.

508th PIR Activated at Camp Blanding, Fla., on 20 Oct. 1942. Moved to Camp Mackall in March 1943. Departed for Ireland in Dec. 1943 and arrived in England in March 1944. Attached to the 82d in Jan. 1944. Combat jumps on 6 June in Normandy and 17 Sept. 1944 at Nijmegen, Holland. It was released from the 82d in May 1945 and returned to France. Returned to Camp Kilmer, N.J., and inactivated on 25 Nov. 1946.

509th PIB The 504th PIB was redesignated 2/503d PIR on 24 Feb. 1942 at Ft Benning. It was detached and sent to England in June 1942, where it was redesignated 2/509th PIR on 2 Nov. (no other regimental units activated). It executed the first American combat jumps when the battalion was to have flown non-stop from England to Oran, Algeria in mid-Nov. 1942. The operation was a disaster, with the transports becoming scattered in foul weather and landing in French and Spanish Moroccos, Gibraltar, and only a few reaching Oran. A handful of paratroopers actually jumped, but contributed little to the subsequent battle. Two smaller jumps were made in Tunisia, one mildly successful and the other, a small raid, a total failure. Attached to the 82d from June to Sept. 1943. On 10 Dec. it was redesignated 509th PIB at Venafro, Italy. In July 1944 it was attached to the 1st Abn. Task Force and fought in southern France. It later fought in Belgium and Germany under XVIII Abn. Corps and the 101st. After suffering heavily during the Battle of the Bulge, it was inactivated on 1 March 1945 in France and the survivors absorbed into the 82d. Combat jumps on 8 Nov. 1942 at Oran, Algeria; 15 Nov. 1942 at Youls Les Bains, Tunisia; 21 Nov. 1942 at Faid Pass, Tunisia; Sept. 1943 on Ischia island (all these jumps were made only by small elements); 14 Sept. 1943 at Avellino, Italy, and 15 Aug. 1944 at Le Muy, France (entire battalion).

511th PIR Activated at Camp Toccoa, Ga., on 5 Jan. 1943 and assigned to the 11th Abn. Div. the following month at Camp Mackall. Relocated several times before departing for New Guinea in May 1944. Combat jumps on 3 Feb. 1945 at Tagaytay Ridge, Luzon; Los Banos, Luzon, on 23 Feb. 1945 (Co. B. only); and Aparri, Luzon, on 23 June 1945 (reinforced battalion—Gypsy Task Force).

513th PIR Activated on 11 Jan. 1943 at Ft Benning and assigned to 13th Abn. Div. Moved several times until relieved from the 13th and reassigned to the 17th Abn. Div. in March 1944 and relocated to Camp Forrest, Tenn. Departed for England in Aug. 1944 and served in France, Belgium, and Germany. Combat jump on 24 March 1945 at Wesel, Germany. Returned to Camp Myles Standish, Mass., and inactivated on 14 Sep. 1945.

515th PIR Activated on 31 May 1943 at Ft Benning. Moved to Camp Mackall in Jan. 1944 and assigned to the 13th Abn. Div. in March. Departed for France in Jan. 1945. Returned to Ft Bragg in Aug. 1945 and inactivated on 25 Feb. 1946.

517th PIR Activated at Camp Toccoa on 15 March 1943 and assigned to 17th Abn. Div. in April. Moved to Camp Mackall in August and relieved from the 17th in March 1944. Departed for Italy in May 1944, where it fought as a separate regiment under IV Corps. Attached to 1st Abn. Task Force in July 1944 and fought in France and Germany attached to a number of different divisions, including the 82d on three brief occasions. Attached to the 13th Abn. Div. in Feb. 1945 and assigned in March. Paired with the 517th was the 460th PFAB, which followed it to its various assignments. Combat jump at Le Muy, France, on 15 Aug. 1944. Returned to Ft Bragg in Aug. 1945 and inactivated on 25 Feb. 1946.

541st PIR Activated at Ft Benning on 12 Aug. 1943. After moving to Camp Mackall it was returned to Ft Benning in July 1944 and assigned to the Replacement and School Command to train parachute replacements. It was returned to Camp Mackall in Nov. 1944 to prepare for overseas deployment, and departed for the Philippines in June 1945, arriving the next month. It was inactivated on 10 Aug. 1945 at

Lipa, Luzon, when its assets were used to form the 3d Bns. of the 187th GIR and 188th PIR.

542d PIB Activated on 1 Sep. 1943 as 542d PIR and only the 1st Bn. formed. Assigned to the Replacement and School Command in Feb. 1944, and redesignated the 542d PIB on 17 March. Inactivated at Camp Mackall on 1 July 1945.

551st PIR Formed from Co. C, 1/501st PIR (left in Panama when the rest of the battalion departed for Australia) on 26 Nov. 1942 at Ft Kobbe, Panama Canal Zone, as Co. C, 1/551st PIR. The rest of the unit was formed at Ft Benning at the same time and departed for Panama in December. Though officially designated 1/551st PIR, it became generally known as the '551st PIB' and no other regimental elements were formed. Returned to the States in Aug. 1943 and moved to Camp Mackall. Sent overseas in April 1944, arriving in Italy in May, and then moved to Sicily. Attached to 1st Abn. Task Force in July and fought in southern France. Later it fought in Belgium and Germany under XVIII Abn. Corps and the 82d. After suffering heavy casualties during the Battle of the Bulge it was inactivated in France on 10 Feb. 1945 and its remaining personnel assigned to the 82d. Combat jump at Le Muv. France, on 15 Aug. 1944.

***555th PIB** Activated on 30 Dec. 1943 at Ft Benning as the *555th Prcht. Inf. Co. from the *555th Prcht. Test Plat., formed the month before. The Army's only all-black parachute unit was moved to Camp Mackall in July 1944. Reorganized and redesignated Co. A, *555th PIB on 25 Nov. 1944 and the rest of the battalion activated at the same time, though the unit remained a reinforced company for some time. Moved to Pendleton Air Base, Oregon, in May 1945 and assigned to 9th Service Command. Here the unit served as smoke jumpers, augmenting the Forest Service's own (in use since 1939), to fight forest fires begun by Japanese unmanned balloons dropping incendiary bombs. In July one company was detached to Chico Air Base, California. In October the unit moved to Ft Bragg and was attached to the 13th Abn. Div. (Army practice was to place an * before a unit's designation to identify it as 'coloured'.)

Glider infantry units, 1942-45

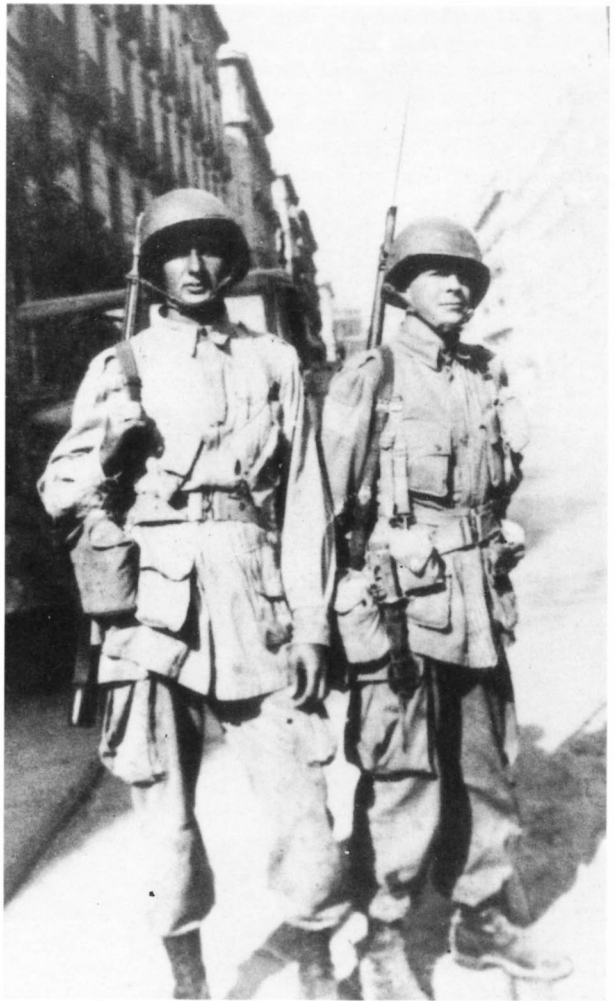
88th GIR Activated at Ft Benning on 14 Oct. 1941 as the 88th AIB, an air-landing test agency for the Chief of Infantry. On 15 June 1942 it was redesignated 1/88th Inf. Regt. Redesignated 88th GIR on 1 Oct. 1942. Moved several times until relocated to Ft Bragg in Dec. 1943, where it was assigned to the 13th Abn. Div. and moved to Camp Mackall the next month. Arrived in France, in Feb. 1945. Inactivated at Caserne, France, on 1 March 1945 and its assets absorbed into the 326th GIR.

187th GIR Activated at Camp Mackall on 25 Feb. 1943 and assigned to 11th Abn. Div. Moved to Camp Polk, La., in Jan. 1944. Arrived in New Guinea in June and moved to Leyte in November.

189th GIR Activated at Ft Bragg on 13 Aug. 1943 and assigned to 13th Abn. Div. Disbanded on 8 Dec. 1943.

190th GIR Activated at Ft Bragg on 13 Aug. 1943 and assigned to 13th Abn. Div. Disbanded on 4 Dec. 1943.

193d GIR Activated at Camp Mackall on 15 April 1943 and assigned to the 17th Abn. Div. Moved to Camp Forrest, Tenn., in March 1944. Arrived in England in August and moved to France in Dec. 1944. Attached to the 101st in Belgium for two brief periods in Jan. 1945. Disbanded on 1 March 1945 to provide replacements for the 194th GIR.



Two 505th Prcht. Inf. Regt. members in Naples, Italy, 1943. The man on the right has a privately purchased knife. The US flag is on their right shoulders. (82d Abn. Div. Ass'n.)

194th GIR Activated at Camp Mackall on 15 April 1943 and assigned to the 17th Abn. Div. Moved to Camp Forrest, Tenn., in March 1944. Arrived in England in August and moved to France in Dec. 1944. Returned to Camp Myles Standish, Mass., and inactivated on 14 Sept. 1945.

325th GIR Formed at Camp Claiborne, La. as the 325th Inf. Regt., part of the 82d Inf. Div. Redesignated 325th GIR on 15 Aug. 1942. Moved to Ft Bragg in October and departed for North Africa in April 1943.

326th GIR Formed at Camp Claiborne, La. as the 326th Inf. Regt., part of the 82d Inf. Div. Redesignated 326th GIR on 6 Aug. 1942. Moved to Ft Bragg in October. Relieved from the 82d Abn. Div. on 4 Feb. and moved to Alliance Army Base, Nebr., then back to Ft Bragg in Dec. 1943, and assigned to the 13th Abn. Div. Arrived in France in Feb. 1945. Returned to Ft Bragg in Aug. 1945 and inactivated on 25 Feb. 1946.

327th GIR Formed at Camp Claiborne, La. as the 327th Inf. Regt., part of the 82d Inf. Div. Redesignated 327th GIR on 15 Aug. 1942, reassigned to the 101st, and moved to Ft Bragg in Sept. Arrived in England in Sept. 1943. Inactivated in France on 30 Nov. 1945.

401st GIR Activated on 15 Aug. 1942 and assigned to the 101st. Moved to Ft Bragg in October. Arrived in England in October 1943. In May 1944 the unit was split between the 82d's and 101st's GIRs to provide them with 3rd Bns., the 1st Bn. going to the 327th GIR and 2d Bn. to the 325th GIR. With the 1944 TOE change, these attachments became official. The regiment was inactivated in France on 1 March 1945.

550th AIB Activated on 1 July 1941 at Howard Field, Panama Canal Zone and conducted testing of air transport techniques. Arrived in the States in Aug. 1943 and moved to Camp Mackall, where it undertook glider training. Sent overseas in April 1944, arriving in Italy in May. Attached to 1st Abn. Task Force in July and glider-landed in southern France. Later fought in Belgium and Germany under XVIII Abn. Corps. Inactivated on 1 March 1945 at Cheniers, France, and its assets used to form 3/194th GIR.

Airborne formations, 1942-45

The 82d Inf. Div. at Camp Claiborne, La., had recently completed its basic unit training and had begun conversion to a motorized division in July 1942. It was soon notified that it would be split and used to form two airborne divisions. The news was greeted with shock, and over 4,000 men went AWOL rather than face the prospect of smashing into the ground in gliders. All returned in a few days and those desiring

A layout of typical parachutist rifleman's basic equipment, circa 1944. M1C helmet with parachute first aid packet, M1936 musette bag, M1923 cartridge belt, M1 bayonet, M1943 entrenching tool, M1910 canteen, and M1942 first aid pouch.



transfer were permitted. The unit was redesignated the **82d Abn. Div.** on 15 Aug., and the **101st Abn. Div.** was activated on the same date. Which infantry regiments and FA battalions, to be converted to glider, would be assigned to which division was decided, literally, by the toss of a coin. In September the 101st was moved to Ft Bragg, followed by the 82d the next month.

Reorganization and initial training was chaotic for both divisions. Large numbers of troops were transferred and new ones received; every unit had to be completely restructured and outfitted with new equipment. A totally different concept of tactical training and logistics was introduced, and some troops were sent to the Parachute School. Existing parachute regiments were assigned to each division and glider training was begun for the other two. While the paratroopers received jump pay and were volunteers, the glider troops were not afforded the same advantages; they were normal ground troops tasked with a different means of delivery into combat, and received no special pay or insignia. Those demonstrating air-sickness or a severe fear of flying were transferred. The newly assigned parachute regiments viewed their new division, few of whose personnel were parachute qualified, with scepticism. Contrary to popular opinion, the majority of an airborne division's personnel were not parachute qualified, with the exception of the one parachute regiment, an FA battalion, Company C of the engineer battalion, parachute maintenance company, and regimental and FA battalion medical detachments. Even the division staffs for the most part were not parachute qualified.

In the 82d the 325th and 326th Inf. Regts. were redesignated Glider at the time of conversion, as were the 319th and



320th FA Bns. The 101st received the 327th GIR and 321st GFAB along with the newly activated 401st GIR and 907th GFAB. The 504th PIR and 376th PFAB were assigned to the 82d, while the 101st received the 502d PIR and 377th PFAB. The two PFABs were newly formed at Camp Claiborne on 16 Aug. 1943. In June 1943 the 101st was augmented by the 506th PIR.

The 82d Abn. Div. departed the States in late April 1943 by ship and arrived in French Morocco on 10 May. Preparations began for Operation HUSKY, the invasion of Sicily. Prior to departing the States it was determined that insufficient gliders would be available for the invasion due to production mismanagement and manufacturing problems. The GIRs were not yet fully trained because of insufficient gliders and transports. In February the 326th GIR was replaced by the 505th PIR while still at Ft Bragg. With the 505th came the original parachute FA unit, the 456th PFAB and Co. B, 327th Engr. Bn. was converted to parachute. The 326th GIR was attached to the Abn. Command.

After many revisions America's first major airborne operation plan was reduced to the reinforced 505th PIR, with other units coming over after the first day. The separate 2/509th PIR was attached to the 82d for the invasion. The operation in early July 1943 proved a disaster with most sticks miss-dropped by poorly trained transport crews, and over 40% of the 504th PIR's transports being hit by friendly fire. The overall airborne effort contributed little to the invasion, and they suffered excessive casualties.

After fighting as ground troops on Sicily the 82d moved back to North Africa in Aug. 1943, then returned to Sicily and soon assaulted into Italy at Salerno. The 82d fought as ground

Members of the 1st Special Service Force in Italy, 1944. Both wear the second type of mountain parka issued to the Force, olive green, reversible to white, with a fur ruffed hood. (National Photographic Collection of Canada)

troops until November. The division, minus the 504th PIR, returned to North Africa, and shipped to England via Northern Ireland, arriving in Feb. 1944. The 504th PIR remained in Italy and fought at Anzio, rejoining the division in England in April 1944. The division's 456th PFAB sent Batteries C and D to England, where a new 456th was formed to rejoin the division. The reduced battalion provided the assets for the 463d PFAB activated in Italy on 20 Feb. 1944, which eventually joined the 101st. The 82d assaulted into Normandy on 6 June 1944 reinforced by the 507th and 508th PIRs, but minus the 504th PIR. The division returned to England in July to prepare for the MARKET GARDEN operation, and assaulted into the Nijmegen area in Sept. 1944, where it fought until November. Committed to the Ardennes counter-offensive in December, it fought there until Feb. 1945, and in Germany from April until hostilities ended on 7 May 1945. The 82d was deployed to Berlin and Frankfurt for occupation duty until the end of 1945, when it was returned to Ft Bragg.

The 101st Abn. Div. departed Ft Bragg and arrived in England in Sept. 1943. It was augmented by the 501st PIR in May, and the 401st GIR was split between the 82d and 101st to give their GIRs 3rd Bns. Air assaulted into Normandy on 6 June 1944, it fought there until July, when it returned to England. The division air assaulted into Eindhoven, Holland, in Sept. 1944, fighting there until November, when it moved back to France. The 463d PFAB was attached in Dec. 1944.



A group of camouflaged 1st Special Service Forcemen in Italy, 1944. They wear M1941 field jacket and mountain trousers. Note the centre man, armed with a Thompson M1A1 sub-machine gun, its 30-round magazines are carried in a pocket designed for the 20-round. (National Photographic Collection of Canada)

Committed to the Ardennes counteroffensive in December, the division fought there and in Germany until Feb. 1945, when it was relocated to France for reorganization, where the 401st GIR was disbanded on 1 March. Sent into Germany at the end of March, the 101st fought there until hostilities ended on 7 May 1945. It was planned to return the division to the States for redeployment to the Pacific as one of two airborne divisions slated for the invasion of Japan. Not needed for this eventuality, it was inactivated in France on 30 Nov. 1945.

The **11th Abn. Div.** was activated at Camp Mackall, NC, on 25 Feb. 1943. It was the only airborne division to retain all its originally assigned regiments and FA battalions. The 187th and 188th GIRs were activated with the division, as were the 674th and 675th GFABs. The 511th PIR had been activated at Camp Toccoa, Ga. on 5 Jan. and moved to Camp Mackall just before the division's activation. The 457th PFAB was activated at Ft Bragg on the same date. In Jan. 1944 the division moved to Camp Polk, La., and arrived in New Guinea in May 1944, where it undertook extensive training. The 188th GIR was converted to a PIR and the 674th GFAB to a PFAB on 20th July; the 572d GFAB was assigned on the same date. The division was shipped to Leyte in November and fought there until Jan. 1945. The division was gravely short of gliders due to the demands of the European Theatre

and only limited air transport support was available. This severely limited the unit's ability to conduct airborne operations, but Bty. A, 457th PFAB was jumped in to establish firing positions at Manarawat, Leyte, on 4 December. The division then moved to western Luzon and the 511th PIR and 457th PFAB conducted a combat jump on 3 Feb. at Tagaytay Ridge. Operations shifted to southern Luzon in late February, where the division fought until July 1945. Here Co. B, 511th PIR jumped at Los Banos on 23 February. On 23 June a reinforced 511th PIR battalion and Bty. C, 457th PFAB jumped at Aparri. The 11th was flown to Okinawa to prepare for its part of the invasion of Japan, arriving the day the war ended. It was soon flown into Japan as part of the Army of Occupation.

On 15 April 1943 the **17th Abn. Div.** was activated at Camp Mackall. The 193d and 194th GIRs were activated with it as were the 680th and 681st GFABs. The 517th PIR had been activated at Camp Toccoa in March and was assigned to the 17th, but did not join the division until August. The 466th PFAB was activated there on 1 August. In March 1944 the 517th was relieved from the division and the 513th assigned in its place. In March the 17th moved to Camp Forrest, Tenn. In August it arrived in England, where the 507th PIR was attached. The division was flown into France in December and engaged in ground combat until Feb. 1945. In March the 193d GIR was disbanded and the attached 507th PIR was assigned. The entire division air assaulted across the Rhine at Wesel, Germany on 24 March 1945 and fought until the next month. It was involved with establishing military government in western Germany when hostilities

ended in May. It did not receive its fourth FA battalion, the 464th PFAB, until June. It was not required in the Pacific, and was returned to the States in Sept. 1945 for inactivation.

The **13th Abn. Div.** was activated on 13 Aug. 1943 at Ft Bragg, NC. It received the existing 513th PIR and 458th PFAB. The 189th and 190th GIRs and 676th and 677th GFABs were activated with the division. In December the two GIRs were disbanded, with their personnel absorbed into the existing 88th and 326th GIRs, themselves relieved from the 17th. The 13th moved to Camp Mackall in Jan. 1944, where the 515th PIR replaced the 513th in March. The 13th departed the States in January and arrived in France in Feb. 1945. In order to reorganize under the 1944 TOE, the 517th PIR was attached to the 13th after its arrival in France and was assigned on 1 March; the 88th GIR was inactivated. The 460th PFAB was assigned in Feb. 1945. The division was initially slated for the Rhine crossing airborne operation, but lack of aircraft prevented its participation and it was destined to see no combat, being kept in theatre reserve. The 13th did serve a valuable rôle, however, providing replacements for the battered 17th, 82d, and 101st. After VE Day long-range plans for the division included its return to the States, where it would be reorganized as an infantry division and committed to the invasion of Japan. It returned to the States in August and, not needed in the Pacific, was moved to Ft Bragg, where

it assumed the task of out-processing airborne personnel, a rôle originally planned for the 17th.

The **15th Abn. Div.** was scheduled for activation in 1943 along with nine infantry divisions; these proposed formations became known as 'ghost' divisions. The lack of sufficient parachute personnel, the need for more non-divisional support units than originally projected, increased demand for battle replacements, and expansion of the AAF led to the cancelling of its activation. Five other airborne divisions (6th, 9th, 18th, 21st, 135th) were numbered among the 19 'phantom' divisions, these non-existent units (never intended for activation) playing a part in Operation FORTITUDE in 1944—a deception plan to mislead the Germans into believing the Allies would land in the Pas de Calais rather than Normandy.

The Provisional Seventh Army Abn. Div. was formed on 8 July 1944 and redesignated the **1st Abn. Task Force** (1ATF) on 15 July. The Force was assembled outside Rome, Italy, and given one month to prepare for the invasion of southern France. It was assigned an odd collection of dissimilar airborne units: 517th PIR, 1/551st PIR, 509th PIB, 550th AIB, and 2nd, British Independent Prcht. Bde. (a complete self-contained formation), backed by artillery from

Bty. C, 456th Prcht. FA Bn., the first parachute artillery unit, parades in England sometime prior to Normandy. All are armed with M1 carbines. (82d Abn. Div. Ass'n.)





Members of 2d Bn., 504th Prcht. Inf. Regt. don T-7 parachutes in preparation for a training jump Sissow, France, 1944. (82d Abn. Div. Ass'n.)

the 460th and 463d PFABs and 602d GFAB. A number of support units were also attached. Code named Rugby Force and organized into five different-sized combat teams, it air assaulted into the Argens Valley in the vicinity of Le Muy on 15 August. The 1st Special Service Force replaced 2nd Independent Prcht. Bde. on 22 August. The 1ATF fought to the Italian border, and was dissolved on 23 Nov. with most of its units being attached to XVIII Abn. Corps.

The **1st Prcht. Inf. Bde.** was activated under the Abn. Command on 20 July 1942 at Ft Benning to supervise the training of assigned units; it was not intended as a tactical formation. On 12 Jan. 1943 it was redesignated the 1st Abn. Inf. Bde. It was relocated to Ft Meade, SD and Alliance Army Airbase, Nebr., in April 1943, enabling its units to train with AAF glider and transport groups. The 88th and 326th GIRs, 507th PIR, and 215th GFAB were assigned to the unit; sometimes known unofficially as the '1st Independent Glider Bde'. In December it moved first to Ft Bragg, then to Camp Mackall, where it was inactivated on 27 Jan. 1944 and its units assigned elsewhere.

The **2d Abn. Inf. Bde.** was activated at Camp Mackall under the Abn. Command on 30 June 1943 to exercise training control over the 501st and 508th PIRs. In Jan. 1944 it moved to Northern Ireland and the two PIRs were relieved and attached to the 101st and 82d respectively. The Brigade HHC was attached to the 82d and its personnel absorbed into the division. It was inactivated on 15 Jan. 1945 even though it had previously lost its identity as a unit.

The **1st Special Service Force** (FSSF) was a truly unique unit¹. Activated on 20 July 1942 at Ft William Henry

Harrison, Mont., it was the only unit ever formed of US and Canadian Army volunteers (administratively assigned to the 'paper' 2nd Canadian Prcht. Bn., later 1st SSF Bn.). The two contingents of troops were completely mixed within the force. Its mission, capabilities, and internal organization were very different from other US units. The unit was extensively trained in infantry tactics, sabotage, raids, winter warfare, ski, mountain, amphibious and parachute operations, making it one of the most diversified and capable units fielded by any of the belligerents. Though parachute trained, the force was not designated airborne; in fact the unit had a rather cavalier attitude to jump training, requiring only two jumps after one week of ground training. Once qualified no other jumps were made, and subsequent replacements were not parachute trained. The FSSF was brigade sized and composed of three regiments (1st, 2d, 3d) of two battalions each plus the Force Service Battalion.

The FSSF was originally intended for use in an ambitious large-scale multiple raid and sabotage operation in Norway, Romania and Italy, which was cancelled before the force had completed training. It was then planned to deploy the unit in other mountainous cold-climate areas. After completing its training in Vermont, it conducted amphibious operations in Alaska's Aleutian Islands in the summer of 1943. It transited the States on its way to North Africa, where it arrived in Nov. 1943. The FSSF landed in Italy on 20 Nov., where it conducted extensive mountain operations and executed a number of daring assaults. The 456th PFAB was attached to the Force from Dec. 1943 to Feb. 1944, when it provided assets for the 463d PFAB, which remained attached to FSSF until June. The Force then took part in the invasion of southern France in Aug. 1944 and was attached to the 1st Abn. Task Force after its initial landings. It had fought its way to the Franco-Italian border by September. The FSSF was inactivated at Villeneuve-Loubet, France, on 5 December. The Canadian personnel were detached and assigned to national units while the surviving US Force members were consolidated with other units to form the 474th Inf. Regt. (Sep)¹.

Another unique unit was the **151st Abn. Tank Co.**, a glider-trained unit not intended for parachute drop. Activated at Ft Knox, Ky., in May 1943, it was equipped with M22 'Locust' light tanks. In the spring of 1944 it moved to Camp Mackall and undertook initial glider training. Due to the experience with the M22 in Normandy, and the lack of heavy gliders, the unit was disbanded in Dec. 1944.

A large number of separate airborne support units were formed in the course of the war. It is often assumed that these were parachute units, but they were trained and equipped for air-landing by transports and, occasionally, glider, this being limited due to shortages. These included non-divisional AA and engineer aviation battalions; AAA machine gun batteries; engineer, signal, ordnance maintenance, and quartermaster companies, all additionally designated Airborne. The AA and engineer aviation battalions were principally allotted to the AAF and equipped to be flown in to defend and repair captured airfields.

The formation originally activated as II Armd. Corps on 17 Jan. 1942 at Camp Polk, La., was redesignated XVIII Corps on 9 Oct. 1943 and tasked with troop training. Upon arrival in England it was redesignated **XVIII Abn. Corps** on 25 Aug. 1944, placed under the control of the First Allied Abn.

¹ See First Special Service, 1942-44, *Military Illustrated, Past & Present* Nos. 1 & 2, 1986.

¹ The FSSF's lineage and honours were assigned to Special Forces on 15 April 1960.



The 504th Prcht. Inf. Regt. chaplain, second from the right, talks to Company D paratroopers at Cheneux, Belgium, Dec. 1944. Airborne chaplains, which were parachute qualified, had a special place in the paratroopers' hearts. The foremost man is armed with an M1903A4 sniper rifle. (82d Abn. Div. Ass'n.)

Army, and given command over the 17th, 82d, and 101st Abn. Divs., and later the 13th. Additionally it commanded nine infantry and armoured divisions at different times. All non-divisional airborne units in Europe were attached to the corps in Nov./Dec. 1944. The corps was involved in the Holland operation in September, followed by commitment to the Battle of the Bulge in December. In March 1945 it launched the Rhine crossing and fought through northern Germany until VE Day. The Corps returned to the States in July, where it was to prepare for the invasion of Japan, but was inactivated on 15 Oct. 1945.

The **First Allied Abn. Army** (FAAA) was formed from the Combined Abn. Forces, a joint US/British command, on 18 Aug. 1944 in Ascot, England. It was tasked with planning future airborne operations and unit training. Under its control were the US XVIII Abn. Corps and IX Troop Carrier Command, and the British 1st Abn. Corps and Troop Carrier Command. It oversaw the Holland operation in September, and in October an advance headquarters was located outside Paris, soon followed by the main headquarters. The FAAA was responsible for such tasks as supplying the 101st during the Battle of the Bulge, moving the 17th Abn. Div. from England to France, and planning the Rhine crossing. On 20 May 1945 the FAAA was disbanded and the US element formed into the First Abn. Army, which doubled as the Berlin District Headquarters. It arrived in Berlin in July and assumed command of the US Sector. It was disbanded on 31 Dec. 1945, with elements forming the Berlin Command.

Post-war and Korea

The airborne had emerged from World War II with a certain mystique. Many of the young airborne regimental and divisional commanders were now commanding conventional divisions and corps; some went on to higher positions of responsibility and influence. It is interesting to note that of the eleven Regular Army divisions active in 1947, only one was armoured and two were airborne. The emphasis on airborne was so strong during this period that after the Korean War all Regular Army officers were required to attend the Airborne or the Ranger Course (later required only for combat arms Regular officers). There was even one totally impractical recommendation that all combat units be airborne qualified to increase their tactical flexibility.

Though the Army had constantly re-evaluated division structure during the war, many of the desired changes were unable to be implemented due to manpower constraints and the burden of making major changes in the midst of a war. The greatly reduced post-war Army was able to effect many of

these changes, though often only on paper due to severe manpower limitations.

Divisions retained the basic triangular structure used during the war, but additional firepower was integrated and internal unit structures streamlined and fine-tuned. Some new weapon systems, improved over the wartime versions, were in production, but only on a limited basis. The Army was greatly reduced in strength and the existing divisions were skeletons; for example, most infantry regiments had only two active battalions. This severe force reduction, and the fact that the Army was forced to virtually 'mark time', were to prove disastrous.

While infantry and armoured divisions were considerably up-graded, at least on paper, the changes made to the airborne division were extensive. A post-war study of the employment of wartime airborne divisions showed that once committed by parachute and glider, they were seldom withdrawn as soon as originally envisioned. They fought prolonged ground actions in the same manner as infantry divisions—sometimes even longer. Their lighter firepower, smaller troop strength, and limited vehicle support made them less effective than an infantry division. Even though they had been up-graded during the war and often reinforced with additional combat support units, they still lacked the combat power of their 'straight leg' counterpart.

For this reason the airborne division received a TOE in 1949 that made it almost a mirror image of an infantry division in manpower, firepower, and heavy equipment. New lighter weapons and equipment systems coupled with the increased load-carrying capabilities of the new Air Force transports (some still on the drawing board) made this a realistic goal. Another major change over the wartime airborne division was that most of its 17,000 assigned personnel were to be parachute qualified.

The distinction between parachute and glider infantry regiments and artillery battalions was eliminated; all existing active regiments and battalions were redesignated Airborne

in 1947/48. Because of the former differences in the two types of units it was difficult to employ them flexibly. Now with three airborne regiments and the artillery battalions capable of both parachute and glider landing, the division was more flexible. Gliders were still in limited use; in fact every item of equipment (with the exception of the tanks and 155mm howitzers) on the new TOE could be landed by glider, and much of it dropped by parachute. Gliders, however, were on the way out. Little glider training was conducted after 1947/48, and the glider landing capability was completely eliminated on 1 Jan. 1953.

The new airborne infantry regiment (AIR) was a potent force. Its three battalions possessed a heavy weapons company with machine gun, 81mm mortar, and 75mm recoilless rifle platoons; a 105mm recoilless rifle platoon was added during the war. The three rifle companies had one weapons and three rifle platoons. The regimental support company had a 90mm anti-tank gun platoon (105mm howitzers being used as an interim substitute, the 90mm was never issued) and two 4.2-inch mortar platoons. There were also service (enlarged in 1954) and medical companies to provide logistical support. 'Straight leg' infantry divisions had a tank battalion and each infantry regiment an organic tank company; the airborne division had two tank battalions, one for general support and the other for attachment of its companies to the airborne regiments after the latter had been parachuted in. The tanks were standard issue and were not air-droppable or glider-landable, nor were most of the assigned personnel required to be jump qualified. In 1954 the second tank battalion was deleted from the division TOE and regimental tank companies added. The 155mm FA battalion, too, was non-airborne.

All divisional support units likewise had capabilities similar to those of an infantry division's. In 1950 the medical companies were expanded to battalions. Parachute maintenance companies were previously classed as infantry units, with the riggers being specially trained infantrymen. Parachutes

Post War and Korean War Era Airborne Divisions, 1946-57

Airborne Division	Abn. Inf. Regts.	Division Artillery ¹		Tk. Bns.	Cav. Recon. Co.	Engr. Bn.	Med. Bn./Co.	Sig. Co.
		FA Bns.	AAA Bn					
11th	187g, 188 ¹ , 511 188, 503 ³ , 511	89*, 457, 674, 675g	88	76†, 710† ²	11	127	11	511
82d	325g, 504, 505	98*, 319g, 376, 456	80	44†, 714† ²	82	307	307	82
Army Reserve, 1946-52								
80th	317, 318, 319g	313, 314, 315g, 905*	159	—	80	305	305	80
84th	333g, 334, 335	325g, 326, 327g, 909*, 909*	84	—	84	309	309†	84
100th	397, 398, 399g	373g, 374, 375, 925*	492	303†, 400†	100 AT	325	325	100
Plat (later Recon)								
108th	518, 519, 485g	506, 507, 581g, 582*	651	—	108	598	353	108
Separate Airborne Regimental Combat Teams, 1950-57								
18th	187	674	187 Bty	—	—	187 Co	2 Plat's	—
508th	508	460	—	—	596 Co	—	—	—

g Infantry regiments and FA battalions originally designated Glider (others were designated Parachute). All units were redesignated Airborne in 1947/48 (active) and 1950/51 (reserve).

* Non-airborne 155 mm howitzer FA battalions. All others were 105 mm.

† Assigned non-airborne unit.

¹ 188th AIR replaced the 187th AIR when the latter was detached from the 11th Abn. Div. in late 1950. The 188th had served with the division until 1949 when it was inactivated.

² 710th and 714th Tk. Bns. relieved from divisions in June 1954.

³ 503d AIR was assigned in March 1951 to bring the 11th Abn. Div. up to strength.



and other air items were procured by the AAF. When the Air Force became a separate service in 1947 the Quartermaster Corps became responsible for parachute procurement, and parachute maintenance companies and the training of riggers came under the control of that branch in the early 1950s.

Members of the 82d Abn. Div. are greeted by liberated Dutch in Nijmegen, Holland, Sept. 1944. An assortment of equipment can be seen to include an M1910 entrenching tool carrier on the man to the right. (Rocco F. Tripodi)

Airborne Division, 1951

HHC, Division	AAA Auto Wpns. Bty.
<i>Inf. Regt.</i> (× 3)	(× 4)
HHC	<i>Special Troops</i>
Inf. Bn. (× 3)	Signal Co.
HHC	MP Co.
Rifle Co. (× 3)	Maint. Co.
Heavy Weapons Co.	QM Co.
Tank Co.* (added in 1954)	Prcht. Maint. Co.
Support Co.	Replacement Co.
Service Co.	<i>Division Troops</i>
Medical Co.	Tank Bn., Medium*
<i>Division Artillery</i>	(× 2—1 deleted in 1954)
HHB, Div. Arty.	HQ, HQ & Service Co.
FA Bn., 105mm Towed (× 3)	Tank Co. (× 3)
HHB	Engineer Bn.
Howitzer Bty. (× 3)	HQ, HQ & Service Co.
Service Bty.	Engineer Co. (× 3)
FA Bn., 155mm Towed*	Medical Bn.
HHB	HHC
Howitzer Bty. (× 3)	Ambulance Co.
Service Bty.	Clearing Co.
AAA Auto Wpns. Bn.	Recon Co.
HHB	Anti-tank Plat.
	(* Non-airborne unit)

<i>Mp</i> Co.	<i>Ord.</i> Co.	<i>Qm</i> Co.	<i>Prcht.</i> Maint. Co.	<i>Repl.</i> Co.
11	711	408	11	11
82	782	407	82	82
80	780	80	780	80
84	784	406	784	—
100	800	100	100	100(700)
108	808	108	108	—
187 Plat	—	187 Plat	—	—
—	—	—	—	—

Airborne units, 1945-57

The **11th Abn. Div.** continued its occupation duties in Japan until March 1949, when they relocated to Ft Campbell, Ky. Here the 188th AIR was inactivated on 30 June 1949, leaving the division with only two AIRs. The 187th AIR was detached and deployed to Japan and later Korea in August 1950. The 188th AIR was again activated, replacing the 187th on 16 Nov. 1950. On 2 March 1951 the 503d AIR was reactivated to bring the division up to strength. The 11th underwent reorganization to the new TOE in 1951. Numerous exercises were conducted throughout the States and such diverse locations as Alaska and Panama. In early 1956 the 11th was moved to Germany, the first airborne division to be stationed there since 1945. Based in southern Germany, it was headquartered at Augsburg.

The **82d Abn. Div.** was returned to Ft Bragg, NC, in Jan. 1946, where it trained to maintain a high degree of readiness. Initially the 82d was to be inactivated and the 101st retained as the only active airborne division in the States; there was a public outcry due to the 82d's record, and the decision was reversed. Kept at full strength while much of the Army was being reduced, the 82d began to assume its place as the nation's key high-readiness reaction force, a status it has maintained to this day. With the outbreak of the Korean War most infantry units in the States were stripped of infantrymen. The 82d was spared this fate and kept in readiness for deployment to Japan or Korea within 30 days' notice. A hard-pressed Gen. MacArthur twice requested the commitment of the 82d, but Army planners wisely kept it in strategic reserve. After the war a number of overseas exercises were conducted.

Two separate airborne regimental combat teams (ARCT)

Waco CG-4A gliders collected after landing in Holland, Dec. 1944. The MARKET GARDEN daylight glider landings were extremely successful when compared to the earlier night landings.



were formed during this period to operate as task-organized independent combined-arms strike units; they could be attached to a division if required. An ARCT was composed of an airborne infantry regiment (its headquarters doubling as the ARCT's), artillery battalion, engineer company, plus other small support units as required.

The **508th ARCT** was activated at Ft Bragg on 16 April 1951. Once brought up to strength it was moved to Ft Benning for jump training *en masse*, and returned to Ft Bragg. Though co-located with the 82d it was not a component of the division. The ARCT was assigned contingency missions to replace the 11th if deployed to Europe or the 82d if sent to Korea. It was moved to Ft Campbell in late 1956 after the 11th departed for Germany, and inactivated on 22 March 1957 with its assets being absorbed into the newly reactivated 101st Abn. Division.

In July 1950 the 187th AIR was brought up to strength by reassigning personnel from the 82d. On 1 August it was detached from the 11th along with various support units and redesignated the **187th ARCT**. It was airlifted to Japan the following month, and then to Korea, with all elements arriving by 25 September. On 20 Oct. the ARCT jumped at Sukchon in an effort to trap retreating North Koreans. On 1 Feb. 1951 the regiment was officially relieved from the 11th Abn., and on the 26th the former attached divisional support units were redesignated and assigned to the 187th. Another jump was executed at Musan-ni on 23 March 1951 along with the 2d and 5th Abn. Ranger Inf. Companies. This operation was intended to cut a Chinese supply route and block retreating forces. Both operations were notable in that they were the first times heavy weapons and vehicles were air dropped, a service provided by the 2348th QM Abn. Supply and Packing Company. In May the 187th was landed on Koje Island to suppress rioting enemy prisoners who had gained control of the prison camps. The unit saw ground combat in 1952-53. The 187th ARCT was returned to the States after the war, and eventually assigned to the 101st Abn. as an AIR from July 1956 to April 1957, its assets, along with the 503d AIR's, providing the basis for the experimental battle group structure.

The **555th PIB (Colored)** was attached to the 82d's 504th PIR in Feb. 1946. In late 1947 it became 3/505th AIR, still a segregated unit. In July 1948 President Truman ordered the armed forces to integrate, and the unit was inactivated on 9 Dec. 1948 with its personnel absorbed into the 82d. Between Aug. 1946 and Nov. 1948 the **501st PIB** was active at Ft Benning. Parachute training was conducted by the Abn. Bn., 1st Student Regt. at Ft Benning. The Abn. Center was closed on 15 June 1946.

The **101st Abn. Div.** was inactivated on 30 Nov. 1945 in France, not to serve again as an active airborne division until 1956. A Department of the Army decision in 1947 did give the 101st and other inactive divisions a new lease on life. Replacement training centres were to be given the designations of wartime divisions to encourage enlistments and build recruits' morale and *esprit de corps*. The training centre divisions' subordinate training units were also to bear the designations of the divisions' former wartime units. The 101st served in such a capacity from 6 July 1948 to 27 May 1949 and 25 Aug. 1950 to 1 Dec. 1953 at Camp Breckenridge, Ky.; and again from 15 May 1954 to 21 Sept. 1956 at Ft Jackson, SC. On that date its colours were transferred to Ft Campbell for reorganization as an active airborne division.



The **17th Abn. Div.** was inactivated on 14 Sept. 1945 at Camp Myles Standish, Massachusetts. It too served as a training centre/division from 6 July 1948 to 10 June 1949 at Camp Pickett, Virginia. It must be pointed out that the 101st and 17th Abn. Divs., while serving as training centre/divisions, were not actually airborne or composed of airborne cadres, nor trained airborne personnel. They simply provided an historical designation for training centres involved with training conscripted troops in basic and advanced individual training. The **13th Abn. Div.** was inactivated on 25 Feb. 1946 at Ft Bragg after acting as an out-processing unit for airborne personnel; and has never been reactivated in any capacity. The 11th, 17th, 82d, and 101st Abn. Divs. were allotted to the Regular Army in 1948, previously allotted to the Organized Reserves or Army of the United States.

XVIII Abn. Corps was inactivated on 15 Oct. 1945 at Camp Campbell, not being needed in the Pacific Theatre. With the expansion of the Army during the Korean War the corps was reactivated on 21 May 1951 at Ft Bragg and placed under Third Army. Its principal task was to supervise the training of general reserve units. After the Korean War it was made responsible for selected strategic reserve forces, a task it has maintained to this day.

In 1946 it was decided to form four airborne divisions within the Organized Reserves. The concept was to employ them in the event of a long-term war as a strategic strike force, in much the same manner as the airborne divisions in World War II. The maintenance of a large active peacetime airborne force was deemed too costly, especially since the US then had the monopoly on nuclear weapons and this was thought to limit the need for large standing special-purpose forces.

Troopers of the 82d Abn. Div. in Belgium, Dec. 1944. The two flanking men are armed with M1911A1 .45 cal. pistols, the one to the left wears the M1916 hip holster and the staff sgt. on the right the M7 shoulder holster. (Rocco F. Tripodi)

Reserve forces at this time were not required to be full-strength. It was thought that Reserve airborne divisions would be able to maintain a sufficient strength with the addition of airborne-qualified veterans. In the event of a mobilization they would be brought up to strength by the call-up of inactive airborne reservists. The infantry divisions selected were inactive at the time of the decision. They were redesignated as airborne, on paper, in 1946/47 and soon formed.

This proved to be an overly ambitious programme. Not all of the assigned units were active; certain support elements were inactive at different times. Various companies of assigned battalions and regiments were also inactive because of strength restrictions. In reality the divisions were hard pressed to maintain even the reduced strengths. Airborne qualification to any significant degree was not obtained by most units, and even those that did failed to maintain it for long. Though many units undertook some training with the 11th and 82d Abn. Divs., they were usually able to muster airborne-qualified personnel only in the hundreds rather than the thousands required. It was found that the level of training required for a proficient airborne unit, with the limited inactive duty time allowed, was out of reach. The effort was deemed a failure and all formations were reorganized and redesignated infantry divisions in 1952.

The **80th Abn. Div.** was formed on 23 Dec. 1946 in

The 'Pentomic' Era

In the early 1950s it was realized in some circles that the United States' monopoly on tactical nuclear weapons would end in the near future. By 1953 senior officers were studying how this might force a restructuring of the Army. Many of the more notable World War II divisional commanders (some of them airborne) had climbed the ladder of command and were already looking ahead to the changes that the loss of nuclear monopoly might bring, one predicting that America 'must expect to be outnumbered' on a future battlefield. In 1954 VII Corps in West Germany conducted exercises on a simulated nuclear battlefield. The conclusions were that World War II unit organizations were unsuited for nuclear tactics, with the exception of the armoured division. It was felt that infantry units had to be organized into 'battle groups' capable of operating semi-independently on a widely dispersed front and deployed in depth.

Further testing of this concept took place in 1954-55 at Ft Benning and Ft Hood, Texas. The results of the Atomic Field Army-1 study demonstrated that a cellular rather than a linear battlefield was possible, but required new tactics and unit structures. Communications improvements suggested that the division could control up to five subordinate manoeuvre units rather than just three regiments.

The recently reactivated 101st Abn. Div. was organized under this concept in Sept. 1956 during Exercise JUMP LIGHT. Its infantry units were organized into five 'airborne infantry combat groups' with the artillery formed into separate batteries. Upon the Army's recommendation, the Secretary of Defense approved the adoption of the new infantry division structure in December under the Reorganization of the Current Infantry Division (ROCID) programme. The counterpart Reorganization of the Airborne Division (ROTAD) was organized along the same lines, but provided with leaner assets and manpower. These new worldwide air-deployable formations were to be applicable to both nuclear and conventional warfare. The Army strove to reduce the division's internal command structure so command and control could be 'streamlined'. Rather than utilizing the triangular concept, it was determined that a given level of command could control five subordinate manoeuvre units. The organizational result was the 'pentomic' division—an acronym of 'penta' five, and 'atomic'.

The pentomic concept was a result of several valid tactical considerations; the problem was that the organizational structure selected to meet these considerations was amiss. The principal combat unit was the 'battle group', which can be described as a large battalion controlled by a regimental headquarters—a description frowned upon by the Army as it maintained that the battle group was much more than merely a reinforced battalion. The non-airborne battle group replaced both the regiment and battalion as command and control, and fire and manoeuvre unit. It was originally composed of a headquarters and service company, four rifle companies, and a 4.2-inch mortar battery.

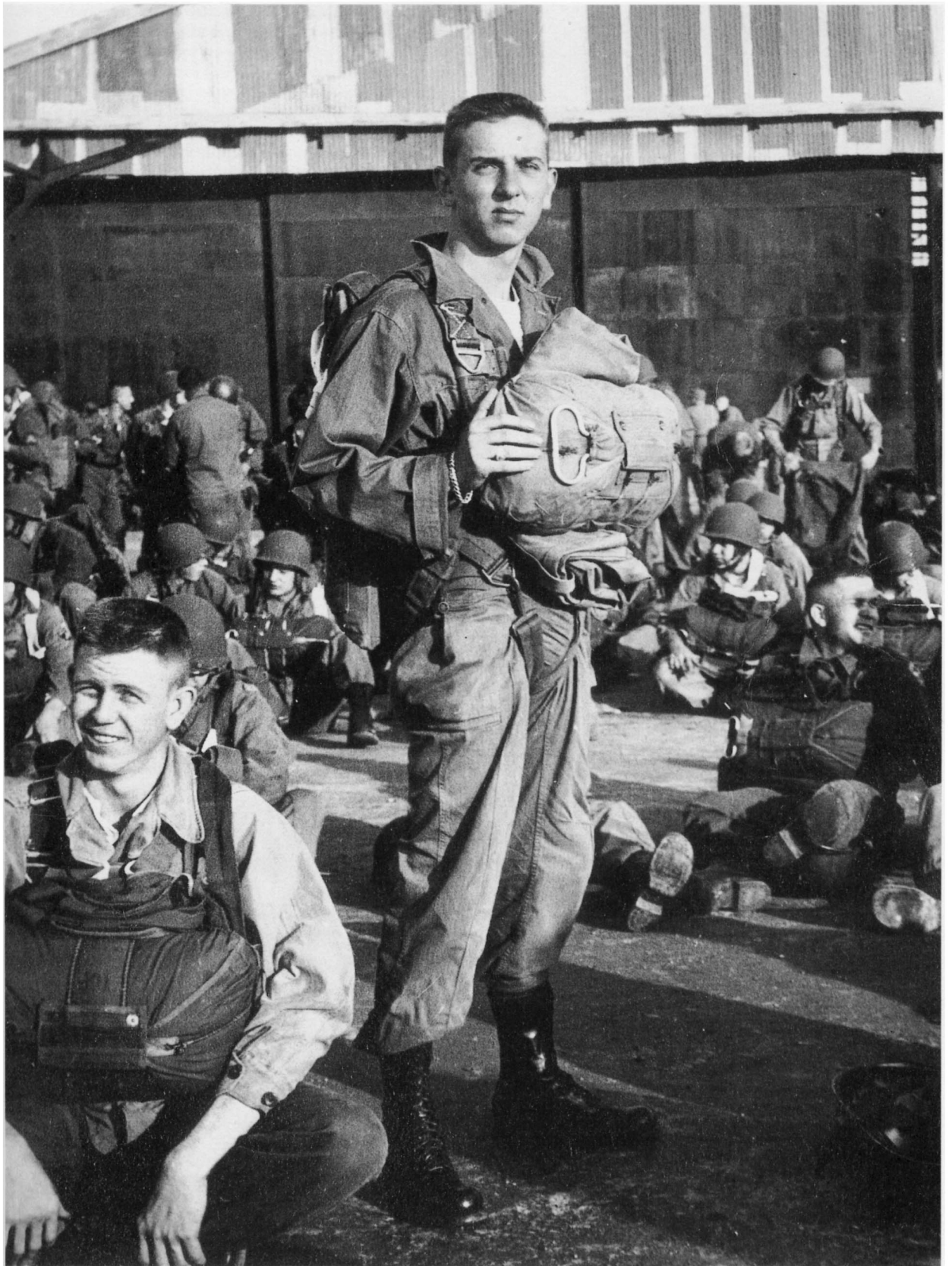
The pentomic TOE was approved on 20 Dec. 1956, and the

The 511th Prcht. Inf. Regt., 11th Abn. Div., Hachoni, Japan, 1947. They wear herringbone fatigues and the T-7 parachute. An aviator's kit bag is folded under the reserve into which the main parachute is to be packed after landing. (Normand 'Duke' LeClerc)



A Co. E, 504th Prcht. Inf. Regt. staff sgt. in Germany, 1945. Note the captured German map case, behind which are M1938 wire cutters. (82d Abn. Div. Ass'n.)

Richmond, Va., its elements located in Virginia, Maryland, and DC. It was redesignated infantry on 10 May 1952. The **84th Abn. Div.** was activated on 24 Sept. 1947 in Madison, Wis., with elements in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Illinois. The 84th was redesignated infantry on 1 March 1952. The **100th Abn. Div.** was activated on 23 Oct. 1946 in Louisville, Ky., its elements located in Kentucky and West Virginia. It was redesignated infantry on 12 May 1952. The **108th Abn. Div.** was a new division which had not seen service. All of its subordinate units were constituted on 15 July 1946 and activated in Atlanta, Ga., on 20 Sept. 1946. In March 1947 its headquarters was moved to Charlotte, NC; its units were in Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida. It was redesignated infantry on 1 March 1952.



Regular Army divisions began to reorganize the following year—not a simple process, due to the many drastic changes involved. A division was effectively rendered non-deployable for at least a year due to restructuring, personnel turmoil, re-equipping, and extensive unit re-training. Among the first divisions to reorganize were the 101st and 11th Airborne. The Regular divisions were all reorganized by 1958.

Numerous command and control, fire support, and other problems soon become apparent. In 1959 a number of changes were implemented to alleviate some of the problems, but many were never resolved. Within infantry divisions this included the addition of a fifth rifle company to the battle group, the reduction of the others from four to three rifle platoons, replacement of the mortar battery by a combat support company, and an extensive reorganization of the division artillery. Exercises soon demonstrated that while the organization was valid to some degree for the nuclear battlefield, it was ill-suited for low and mid-intensity conflicts.

The pentomic structure was actually well suited to the airborne division. It permitted flexibility when organizing an airborne assault and the subsequent possible wide dispersal of air-dropped elements. The airborne battle group, if widely dispersed as many battalions were during some World War II jumps, was still capable of assembling significant troops without the previous standard 90 per cent assembled (ideal) requirement before executing its ground mission. The division was extremely austere in man- and firepower as well as logistical support. Unlike the 1947 airborne division, structured parallel to the infantry division and capable of prolonged ground combat, the pentomic airborne division was

organized specifically for parachute and air-landed assault followed by short-duration ground operations. Its low 11,500 man strength was also forced by the troop reductions inflicted on the Army.

In order to function for extended periods in ground combat against conventional forces it would have to be heavily reinforced with fire, combat and logistical support. The division was especially deficient in artillery and anti-tank and air defence weapons. The former was composed of only five 105mm batteries and an air-transportable Little John rocket battery. The two-company engineer battalion was only sufficient to execute small-scale tasks and repair landing strips.

From its inception the airborne battle group had five rifle companies with one weapons and four rifle platoons. It retained the mortar battery, and received no combat support company when the infantry division battle groups were reorganized. Rather than a large division train the airborne division possessed a small support group providing only the most essential logistical support. Even routine garrison operations required service support augmentation. A unique entity was the command and control battalion, composed of company-sized units not assigned to other divisional elements and directly under division HHC control, which doubled as the battalion headquarters.

For all its faults, the pentomic concept did introduce some good organizational features, some of which were retained in its successor. The pentomic concept was also responsible for the adoption of the Combat Arms Regimental System (CARS). The old, proud airborne regiments had to be

Pentomic Era Airborne Divisions and Brigades, 1957-63

<i>Airborne Division</i>	<i>Battle Groups</i>	<i>Arty. Btys.¹</i>	<i>Cav. Trp.</i>	<i>Engr. Bn.</i>	<i>Sig. Bn.</i>	<i>Maint. Bn.</i>	<i>S&T Co.</i>
11th Abn	1-187, 2-502, 1-503, 2-504, 2-505	A-320, B-320, C-320, D-321, E-321, C-377 (LJ)	C-17	127	511	408	11
82d Abn	1-325, 2-501, 2-503, 1-504 ² , 1-505 ²	A-319, B-319, C-319, D-320, E-320, B-377 (LJ)	A-17	307	82	782	407
101st Abn	2-187, 1-327, 1-501, 1-502, 1-506	A-321, A-377, A-467, A-81 (LJ)	B-17	326	501	801	426
24th Abn Bde, 24th Inf Div.	1-187 ³ , 1-503 ³	A-319, E-319, A-321, B-321, C-321, A-377 (LJ)	C-17	D/3, E/3	Det, 24 Sig	Det, A/ 724 Ord	Det, 24 S&T
Abn Bde, 8th Inf. Div.	1-504, 1-505	A/5-81, B/5-81 ⁴ 1-2	—	A/12	Det, 8 Sig	Det, 708 Ord	Det, 8 S&T

¹ All artillery batteries are 105 mm unless designated Long John rocket (LJ).

² Replaced by 2d BG, 504th and 1st BG, 187th Inf. in Jan. 1959.

³ Replaced by 1st BG, 504th and 1st BG, 505th Inf. in Jan. 1959.

⁴ Remainder of battalion was non-airborne.

splintered in order to accommodate the battle group structure, which also meant the disintegration of long-standing regimental traditions, and made a shambles of proud unit lineages. This system was carried over into the pentomic's successor, and the Army has since suffered from a lack of tactical unit cohesion and true *esprit de corps*. Further problems affected the pentomic division when the post Korean War Army was forced to reduce its manpower between 1956 and 1959, retaining only 15 divisions. Firepower improvements could not completely make up for decreased manpower. Manning, strategic mobility, command and control difficulties, and the problems with leaders adapting to such radical organizational and tactical doctrine changes led the Army to begin considering a new structure to replace the problem-plagued pentomic division as early as 1959. The Army justified such a drastic and costly change by stating that more flexibility was needed for future wars and that the pentomic concept was only temporary, anyway. The Regular Army divisions were converted to the new structure between 1962 and 1964. With the demise of the pentomic division, one general remarked, 'Ground commanders everywhere breathed a sigh of relief when they were no longer faced with the grim possibility of having to employ it in combat.'

Pentomic Airborne Division, 1958

(Division HHC is a component of Command & Control Bn.)

Battle Gp. (× 5)

Division Artillery

HHC

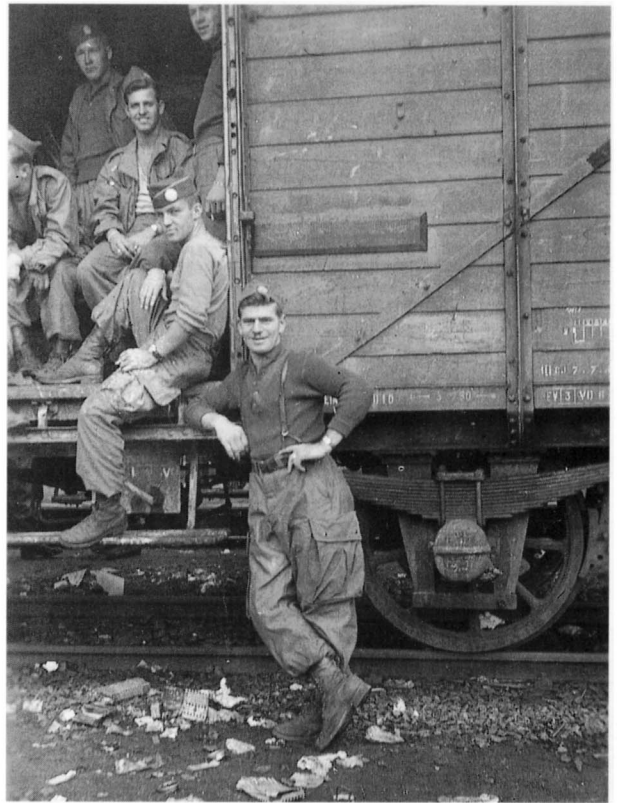
HHB, DIVARTY

Rifle Co. (× 5)

Howitzer Bty, 105mm,

Mortar Bty.

Towed (× 5)



Members of the 82d Abn. Div. relax in a boxcar somewhere in Germany after VE Day. The standing individual wears the five-button OD sweater and M1943 field trousers. Oddly, all wear garrison caps with their field uniforms. (Richard Johnson)

Med. Co.	Prcht. Sup. & Maint. Co.	Admin. Co.	Avn. Co.	C&C Bn.
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11	11	11	11	
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82	82	82	82	82
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326	321	101	101	101
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Det, 24 Med	11	—	—	—
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Det, 8 Med	11	—	—	—
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Missile Bty, 762mm Rocket, Towed	Division Troops
Division Support Gp.	Command & Control Bn.
HHD, Div. Spt. Gp.	Division HHC
Ordnance Maint. Bn.	Cavalry Trp.
HQ & Maint. Support Co.	Aviation Co.
Emergency Repair Co.	Admin. Co.
QM Supply & Trans. Co.	Engineer Bn.
Parachute Supply & Maint. Co.	HHC
Medical Co.	Engineer Co. (× 2)
	Signal Bn.
	HHD
	Command Opns. Co.
	Forward Comm. Co.

Airborne units 1957-64

The 11th Abn. Div. was organized under the pentomic structure in March 1957, a year after its deployment to Germany. Based at Augsburg, the division was deployed in the forward area, limiting its use as an airborne counterattack force. The 11th did plan numerous contingency missions requiring an airborne/air-landing capability not only in Europe, but in other parts of the region. The division was inactivated on 1 July 1958 and its assets used to form the 24th Inf. Div., which maintained a limited airborne force (described below).

During this period the 82nd Abn. Div. remained at Ft Bragg, NC, continuing its mission as one of the Army's key



Members of Co. B, 505th Prcht. Inf. Regt. prior to a C-82 jump at Ft Bragg, early 1948. The small 'goldenlite' PFC insignia can be seen on the third man to the right. (Lionel Herbert)

strategic reserve formations. Dozens of exercises were undertaken in Greenland, Turkey, Greece, South Korea, Puerto Rico, Panama and across the United States to maintain the division's readiness and perfect its skills. The 82d's conversion to the pentomic structure began in March 1957. In 1958 the Army's first 'rapid deployment force', the Strategic Army Corps, was formed with the 82d committed as its back-up airborne division. Exercises continued, including the first joint exercise by the 82d and 101st in 1959. Oct. 1962 saw the division on full alert to execute an airborne assault into Cuba during the missile crisis.

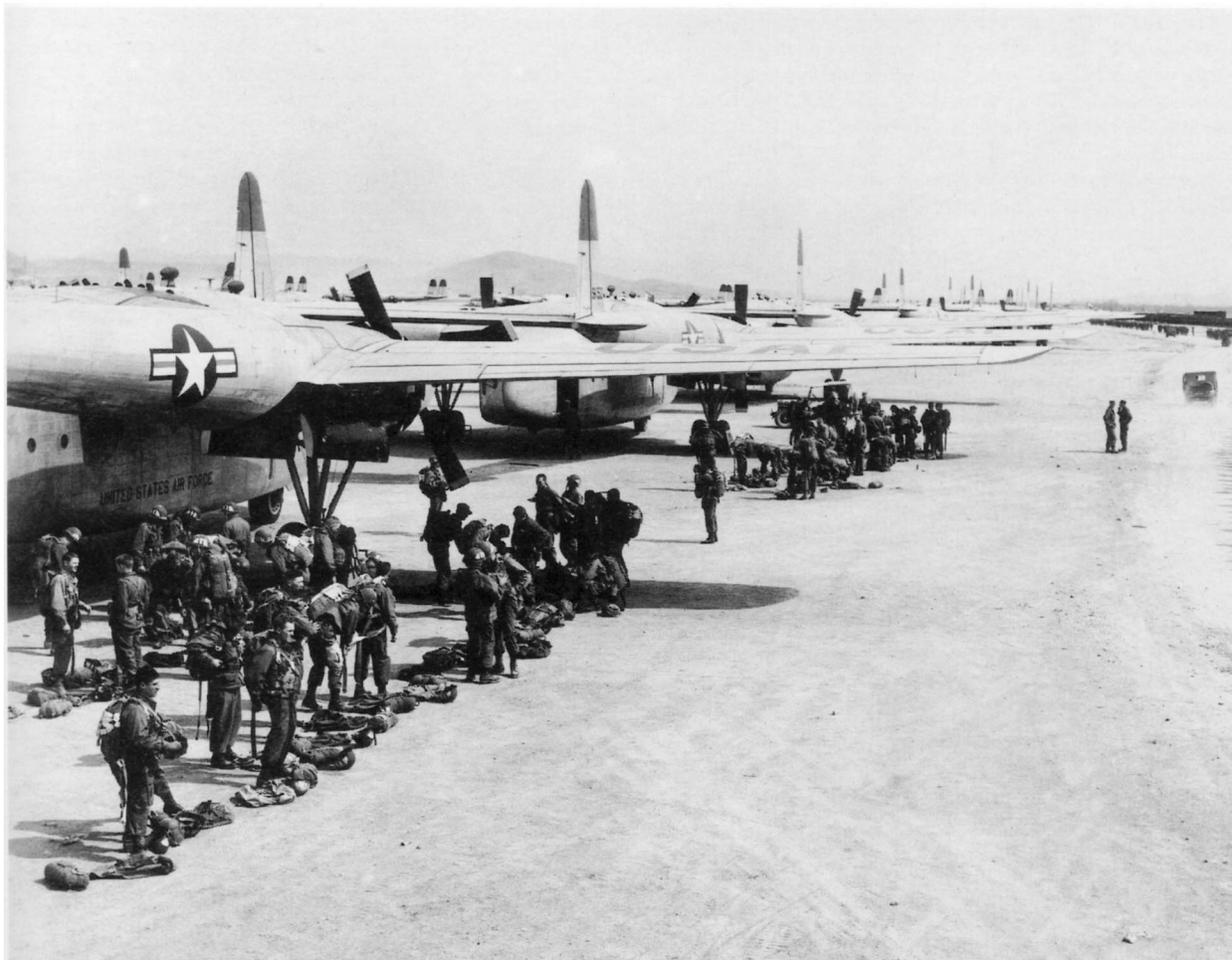
The **101st Abn. Div.** was still a training centre at Ft Jackson, SC, when it was alerted on 16 March 1956 that it would become an active division. The unit colours were transferred to Ft Campell, Ky., on 21 Sept. 1956. There it became a test unit for the pentomic structure and the first division to be fully reorganized under the concept. In addition to exercise participation, the 101st was extensively used to test equipment and airborne tactics. From 1958 the 101st was the Strategic Army Corps' key airborne division. In Sept. 1957 the division was employed to suppress civil disturbances in Little Rock, Ark., and again in Sept. 1962 at the University of

Mississippi. The following month saw the 101st on ready alert to follow the 82d into Cuba.

XVIII Abn. Corps was designated as the Strategic Army Corps (STRAC¹) in 1958 (an additional mission title rather than a redesignation—it remained the XVIII Abn. Corps). Its mission was to provide a flexible, mobile strike capability deployable worldwide on short notice without declaration of an emergency. The 101st Abn. and 4th Inf. Divs. were designated as the STRAC's first-line divisions while the 82d Abn. and 1st Inf. Divs. provided back-up in event of a general conflict. The 5th Logistical Command provided the corps with service support while XVIII Abn. Corps Arty. controlled artillery units.

When the 11th Abn. Div. was inactivated it was still felt that US Army, Europe, should retain an airborne force. This was accomplished by organizing the two-thirds of the 24th Inf. Div. at Augsburg as airborne. This made it the first infantry division to contain organic airborne units. The 24th was activated on 1 July 1958 in Germany as the 11th's replacement, with much of its equipment and personnel coming from the airborne division. The 24th's airborne elements, two battle groups and their 'slice' of combat support and service support units, were provisionally formed into an

¹STRAC, pronounced 'strack', soon became a word, coined by paratroopers, to describe an individual or unit in full readiness and of professional bearing. The acronym also provided the corps' motto: 'Skilled, Tough, Ready Around the Clock.'



The 187th Abn. Regimental Combat Team prepare to load for the Munsan-ni jump, 23 March 1951, Teugu, Korea. The aircraft are C-119s. (USAF via 82d Abn. Div. Ass'n.)

airborne brigade, known semi-officially as the **'24th Abn. Bde.'** The brigade's headquarters was provided by the small brigade headquarter section organic to pentomic infantry divisions, with the assistant commander acting as the brigade commander. During this period the '24th Abn. Bde.' was to be the only airborne force deployed into a potentially combat environment.

Though the STRAC's rôle was to provide a light, easily deployable force for use in limited war or other emergency, it had only limited ability for overseas deployment due to airlift limitations. Without the declaration of a national emergency the required airlift assets would not be released to support a troop deployment. The government of Lebanon, faced with political turmoil caused by Syrian- and Egyptian-backed opposition groups, requested military intervention by the US in order to prevent a collapse. Due to the problems of obtaining sufficient airlift assets, it was decided to employ forces closer to the region rather than STRAC elements. Contingency plans for such an eventuality had been formulated in 1956 with the 11th Abn. Div. given the mission. The 24th Inf. Div. assumed the mission after it was activated.

The situation deteriorated and on 14 July 1958 President Eisenhower ordered US forces to begin deploying. This was a mere two weeks after the 24th Inf. Div. had assumed the airborne mission, a testament to the division's planning and co-ordination abilities. The '24th Abn. Bde.' and its 1st BG,

187th Inf., air-landed on the 16th. The brigade's other battle group did not deploy; however other 24th Inf. Div. support units were sent in as part of Army Task Force 201, to which the brigade was subordinate. Serving alongside Marine units, the paratroopers acted as a neutral peacekeeping force. Though there were a few remote shooting incidents causing American casualties, the intervention never escalated into more serious confrontations. The committed '24th Abn. Bde.' elements were withdrawn along with all other US forces by 15 October 1958.

Between Dec. 1958 and Feb. 1959 the '24th Abn. Bde's.' 1st BG, 187th and 1st BG, 503d Inf. rotated by sea-lift to Ft Bragg for reassignment to the 82d Abn. Division. They were replaced by 1st BG, 504th and 1st BG, 505th Inf. from the 82d. However, they were not assigned to the 24th Inf. Div. The 24th was deployed in the forward area, near the East German border. It was felt there would be little opportunity to deploy the airborne brigade in the event of a Soviet cross-border offensive. The 8th Inf. Div., in southern Germany since 1956, was moved north of the Rhineland and headquartered at Bad Kreuznach, where it served as Seventh Army's reserve division. The airborne rôle was transferred to the 8th to

maximize the airborne's employment opportunities. The two newly arrived airborne battle groups were assigned to the 8th along with other airborne units. This airborne element was known semi-officially as 'Abn. Bde., 8th Inf. Div. and was to provide the basis for the reorganized 8th Inf. Div's. 1st Bde. (Abn./Mech.) on 1 April 1963.

In June 1960 the 2d BG (Abn.), 503d Inf. was relieved from the 82d (replaced by 2-504th Inf.), assigned to the 25th Inf. Div. (stationed in Hawaii), and shipped to Okinawa to serve as a Pacific region airborne reaction force. It was relieved from the 25th Inf. Div. in July 1961 and assigned to the newly activated **173d Abn. Bde. (Sep)** in March 1963. The 1st BG (Abn.), 503d Inf. (replaced by 1-504th Inf.) was relieved from the 82d and assigned to the 173d at the same time, with both battle groups being reorganized as battalions under the pentomic structure's replacement.

The ROAD to Vietnam

The deficiencies of the pentomic division structure had become apparent to most by 1960. A new structure, the Reorganization Objective Army Division (ROAD—pronounced 'row-ad') began development. Basically this structure was an adaptation of the task force concept so successfully employed by the armored division since 1943 and retained even through the pentomic era. Additionally it provided an organization which permitted a return to tactical concepts with which combat leaders were more familiar—the traditional 'two up and one back', among others.

The decision to reshape the Army's divisions was announced on 25 May 1961. The foundation for the TOEs had been laid and the service schools were preparing training literature to incorporate the new structure into their curricula. Though



there was some opposition to the reorganization, most desired a return to the regimental system rather than retention of the unsatisfactory pentomic structure.

The prime philosophy of ROAD was to tailor the unit to meet the tactical need. ROAD did not attempt to provide a universal division capable of fulfilling all needs. It had been recognized that this was an impossible task due to the different needs of high-, mid-, and low-intensity conflicts; deployment requirements; enemy capabilities; and weather and terrain in the areas of operation. Even political and budgeting considerations could have an effect on the organization of deployed divisions. ROAD provided a highly flexible structure composed of a standard division base common to all types (though equipped to support each types' mobility means) coupled with the ability to assign manoeuvre battalions (airborne infantry, mechanized infantry, tank, or 'straight leg' infantry; in 1964 airmobile infantry and light infantry battalions were added) in whatever mix and numbers needed to accomplish the assigned mission. In effect the division became whatever its assigned manoeuvre battalions made it. Even then the structure was not fixed. Manoeuvre battalions could be cross-attached between divisions as required. There was no 'standard' division organization under the ROAD system; it was seldom that any two divisions were organized exactly the same. This flexibility to tailor formations to meet the tactical needs of specific areas of operation and enemy forces was the key to the success of ROAD and subsequent organizations.

The first divisions formed under ROAD were the newly reactivated 1st Armd. and 5th Inf. (Mech.) Divs. in early 1962. The airborne divisions were not converted until 1964. Four types of divisions were formed under ROAD: infantry, mechanized infantry, armoured, and airborne. The mechanized and armoured were basically the same and were actually traditional designations in order to retain infantry and armoured division lineages, though the mix of mechanized and tank battalions was always reflected in the divisions' structure.

The division base was composed of standard combat support and service support units common to all types of divisions. Included in the base were three brigade HHCs. The brigades had no assigned units, but rather were tailored to meet tactical needs by attaching manoeuvre battalions assigned or attached to the division. Normally a division would have nine or ten such battalions, though up to 15 could be controlled and supported. Moreover, up to two additional brigades could be attached. The airborne divisions were more or less standardized with nine infantry and one light tank battalions. In garrison the battalions were stabilized for administrative purposes as far as attachment to the brigades, but in exercises and combat they would be re-attached as necessary. The brigade was now the unit through which the division controlled its manoeuvre units, the battalions.

The various types of manoeuvre battalions themselves were similar in structure, each initially composed of an HHC with service support platoons (communications, maintenance, support, medical) and combat support sub-units (scout, anti-tank, and mortar platoons and ground surveillance radar section), plus the battalion staff and a battalion headquarters section. The battle group's combat support company was

Troops of 1st Battle Gp., 187th Inf., '24th Abn. Bde.' draw jump gear and board a C-130 bound for Lebanon, July 1958. They wear their jumpwings on ovals over their left pockets. Note the locally applied helmet camouflage paint.



eliminated and its assets merged with the HHC. This forced a return to the original battle group HHC structure, and likewise to the problems of a single commander attempting to provide service support to the unit as well as controlling combat support platoons with totally different missions. This was rectified in 1966 when a combat support company was formed in battalions deployed to Vietnam to control the combat multipliers, though airmobile and light infantry battalions had such companies in their TOE from 1964. Other airborne battalions did not form combat support companies until 1972. All types of battalions had three 'line' companies. The airborne rifle company was composed of one weapons and three rifle platoons. From 1967/68 a fourth rifle company was added to airborne and airmobile battalions deployed in Vietnam.

Support units assigned to the division base could also be tailored to meet tactical needs. The division base was composed of three elements. The division artillery (DIVARTY) controlled all artillery battalions, which could be attached to brigades. All service support units were under the division support command (DISCOM). Other combat support units, usually referred to as division troops, were directly under the control of the division headquarters, but their subordinate sub-units could be placed in direct support of the brigades and even further attached down to battalion level. The division would retain some of these elements under its own direct control as necessary. Additionally, a wide range of other combat support and service support units could be

Members of Co. E, 1st Battle Gp., 506th Inf., 101st Abn. Div. train with their recently issued M14 rifles, 1958. They are still equipped with M1945 combat packs, M1943 entrenching tools, and M1923 cartridge belts, having not yet received the new M1957 gear.

placed in support of a deployed division, greatly increasing its strength and capabilities. Actual strengths fluctuated due to attachments and organizational changes, but were generally around 15,000 troops.

ROAD Airborne Division, 1968*

Division HHC	<i>Division Support Command</i>
<i>Brigade HHC (× 3)</i>	HHC, DISCOM
Inf. Bn. (× 9 in division)	Maint. Bn.
HHC	HHD
Rifle Co. (× 3)	Ground Maint. Co.
<i>Division Artillery</i>	Aircraft Maint. Co.
HHB, DIVARTY	Medical Bn.
Arty. Bn., 105mm Towed	◦ HQ & Support Co.
(× 3)	Medical Co. (× 3)
HHB	Supply Co. ¹
Howitzer Bty. (× 3)	Air Equipment Support Co.
	Admin Co.

¹ From 1964-66 a Supply & Transport Bn. existed in place of these two companies. It was composed of an HHD, Supply & Service Co., and Air Equipment Support Co. In 1974 a Supply & Service Bn. replaced the two separate companies and returned to the previous battalion structure.



Members of Co. A, 2d Battle Gp., 501st Inf., 82d Abn. Div. during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Oct. 1962. All are armed prepared for aircraft on-loading at Pope Air Force Base with M1 rifles. (Richard Alderman)

Vietnam Era Airborne Divisions, 1964-72

<i>Airborne Division</i>	<i>Maneuver Battalions</i>	<i>Arty. Bns.</i>	<i>Armd. Cav. Sdn.</i>	<i>Engr. Bn.</i>	<i>Sig. Bn.</i>	<i>Avn. Bn.</i>	<i>Maint. Bn.</i>
82d Abn (1,2,3 Bdes)	1-325, 2-325, 3-325, 1-504, 2-504, 1-505, 2-505, 1-508, 2-508, 4-68AR	1-319, 1-320, 1-321, 7-60ADA ² , B-377(LJ) ³	1-17	307	82	82	782
4th Bde, 82d ⁴	4-325, 3-504, 3-505	3-320	K/1-17	596 Co.	—	—	—
101st Abn	3-187, 1-327, 2-327, 1-501, 2-501, 1-502, 2-502, 1-506, 2-506, 3-506, 2-16AR*	2-319, 2-320, 1-321, A-377 (LJ)*	2-17	326	501	101	801

* 101st Abn Div units which did not deploy to Vietnam.

¹ The Supply & Transport Battalions existed from 1964-66. They were replaced by separate Supply and Air Equipment Support Companies. The 82d's were 502d and 82d respectively and the 101st's were 426th and 321st respectively.

² 7th Bn. (Vulcan/Redeye), 60th ADA added in 1970, redesignated 1st Bn., 4th ADA in 1972.

³ Little John rocket battery eliminated in 1967.

⁴ 4th Bde., 82d Abn. Div. was formed in July 1968 to replace the 3d Bde. and divisional support elements deployed to Vietnam. It was inactivated in Dec. 1969 when the 3d Bde. redepoyed.

<i>Division Troops</i>	Light Airmobile Co.
Light Tank Bn.	Aviation General Support Co.
HHC	Signal Bn.
Light Tank Co. (× 3)	HHC
Armd. Cav. Sdn.	Signal Command Opns. Co.
HHT	Signal Support Opns. Co.
Armd Cav. Trp. (× 2)	MP Co.
Air Cav. Trp.	MI Co. (attached)
Engineer Combat Bn.	ASA Co. (attached)
HHC	Chemical Det. (attached)
Engineer Combat Co. (× 3)	(* Not deployed in Vietnam)
Aviation Bn.	
HHC	

The post-Vietnam Army saw an expansion of the ROAD division to make it even more capable. Additional combat multipliers were added in the early and mid-1970s in the form of combat support units aimed at increasing its combat power and flexibility. These included: combat support company in the infantry battalions in 1972, air defence artillery battalion in 1970, military intelligence battalion in 1978, anti-armour companies equipped with TOW missile added to each airborne brigade in the late 1970s, chemical and finance companies and a materiel management centre assigned to the DISCOM in the early 1980s.

<i>ADA Bn</i>	<i>MI Bn.</i>
HHB	HQ & Opns. Co.
ADA Bty. (× 3)	Electronic Warfare Co.
	Ground Surveillance Co.

Airborne units, 1963–80¹

The **82d Abn. Div.** continued as a principal unit of the STRAC, a mission of increasing importance when elements of the 101st Abn. Div. were deployed to Vietnam in 1965. The division has since been maintained as the Army's strategic immediate reaction force.

¹ The stories of the airborne units deployed to Vietnam are told here only briefly. A more detailed account of operations will be found in Elite 29, *Vietnam Airborne*.

<i>S&T Bn.</i> ¹	<i>Med. Co.</i>	<i>MP Co.</i>	<i>Admin. Co.</i>	<i>MI Co.</i>	<i>ASA Co.</i>
407	307	82	82	82	358
—	D/307	—	—	—	—
426	326	101	101	101	265

In April 1965 a bloody civil war broke out in the Caribbean island nation of the Dominican Republic. With American interests and lives threatened it was decided to commit the 82d as the key component of the Organization of American States' peacekeeping force to restore order. Operation **POWERPACK** began when the division was placed on alert on 27 April. The order for intervention was given on the night of 29 April and the Division Ready Battalion, 1-508th Inf. (reinforced with other division units), was launched. The original plan was for the battalion to land in Puerto Rico, rig for a combat jump, and assault into the capital of Santo Domingo. However, while *en route* the battalion received orders to air-land directly into the airport. Landing in the early hours of 30 April, the force quickly secured its objectives. Other division elements began to arrive, and on 1 May the paratroopers linked up with the Marines on the other side of the city. By the first week of May most of the division had been deployed. Subsequent operations consisted of fire-fights with rebel forces, enduring sniper fire, building clearing actions, and security details. The pro-Cuban rebel forces were eventually suppressed and the legal government re-established its authority. The 82d suffered 60 casualties during the operation. Most of the division was returned to Ft Bragg in June and July, but the 1st Brigade remained as a peacekeeping force until Sept. 1966.

From July to Aug. 1967 the 3d Brigade was committed to Detroit, Mich., to restore order during race riots. Likewise the 1st Brigade was sent to Washington, DC, with the same mission in Oct. 1967. The 1st Brigade, alongside the 2d, returned to Washington for civil disturbance duty in April 1968. The 82d performed these difficult and unappealing tasks with the traditional dedication of the airborne.

On the other side of the world, the Tet 1968 offensive tore through Vietnam in January; desperate for reinforcements, Gen. Westmoreland called for the 82d Abn. Division. Since the division was a key strategic reaction force and one of the few fully prepared units available in the country (many other divisions were greatly understrength and lacked equipment due to the demands of Vietnam), it was decided not to commit the entire division, but only its 3d Brigade. Deployed with the brigade was a slice of divisional support units, in effect making it a separate brigade. Alerted in early February, the brigade was deployed in less than two weeks, with the first elements arriving on the 14th.

A problem arose when it was discovered that many of the paratroopers were not eligible for Vietnam deployment having recently completed a tour there or other lengthy overseas assignment. Given the choice, two-thirds of the brigade returned to Ft Bragg. The greatly understrength brigade was brought up to strength by non-airborne replacements originally destined for other units. From February to September the 3d Brigade operated in the Hue-Phu Bai area. It was then moved to the Saigon area and was charged with providing security. The brigade remained there until it returned home. Stand-down began in Oct. 1969 with all elements returned to Ft Bragg by 11 Dec. 1969.

To replace the 3d Brigade, a 4th Brigade was raised on 12 July 1968. It was never brought fully up to strength due to the drain of qualified paratroopers sent to Vietnam. The 4th Brigade was inactivated when the 3d returned on 15 Dec. 1969.

The **101st Abn. Div.** was kept in a high state of readiness throughout the early 1960s, participating in many exercises due to its mission as a key STRAC division. Its 1st Brigade,

organized as a separate brigade, was deployed to Vietnam to replace the 173d Abn. Brigade. Arriving on 29 July 1965, it was to operate in the Central Highlands region until the arrival of the remainder of the division in the summer of 1967. From May to Nov. 1967 the brigade was attached to Task Force OREGON, a provisional division-sized force. The 3-506th Inf. was attached to the 1st Brigade just before the remainder of the division arrived. From July 1968 to Sept. 1970 it was detached from the 101st and served with other formations. The 1st Brigade never did relieve the 173d, and both remained in Vietnam.

In July 1967 some of the 101st's battalions conducted riot duty alongside the 1st Brigade, 82d Abn. in Detroit, Michigan. In August the remainder of the division was alerted for Vietnam deployment. Desperately short of qualified paratroopers, drained to maintain the 1st and 173d Brigades at full

airborne strength, the 101st began arriving in-country on 18 Nov. 1967. Its brigades were deployed to different areas and seldom served together, being employed as 'fire brigades'. It was not until Oct. 1968 that the division would be collected together. During this period much of the division's strength was made up of non-jumpers, though efforts were made to maintain the 1st Brigade fully airborne qualified.

In Jan. 1968 US Army, Vietnam, conducted a study on the future availability of paratroopers. Due to the drain of combat losses, the limitations of the one-year duty tour, and the demands of competing for qualified jumpers with the 82d Abn. and Special Forces, it was determined that it would be difficult to maintain even the 173d Abn. on jump status. It was decided to convert the 101st to an airmobile division like the 1st Cavalry. This process was begun in July 1969. The last 1st Brigade battalions were taken off jump status on 26 Aug.

Vietnam Era and Post Vietnam Airborne Brigades, 1963-80

<i>Airborne Brigade</i>	<i>Maneuver Battalions</i>	<i>Arty. Bn.</i>	<i>Cav. Trp.</i>	<i>Engr. Co.</i>	<i>Sig. Co.</i>	<i>Spt. Units</i>	<i>Misc. Units</i>
1st Bde (Abn), 1st Cav Div (Airmobile) Vietnam; 1965-66	1-8 Cav, 2-8 Cav, 1-12 Cav	2-19	—	A/8	—	Spt Co/15 S&S Bn, Co A/15 Med Bn, Det A/27 Maint Bn	1 Cav Div Pfdr Co
1st Bde (Abn), 8th Inf Div (Mech) Germany; 1963-73	1-509 (A/M), 2-509(A/M), 1-68 AR†	5-81	A/3-8	A/12	—	11 Pcht Sup & Maint Co	—
1st Bde, 11th Air Aslt Div (TEST) Ft Benning, GA; 1963-65	1-187, 1-188†, 1-511†	B/6-81	—	A/127	—	165 Aerial Equip Spt Det	11 Avn Pfdr Co
3d Bde (Sep), 82d Abn Div Vietnam; 1968-69	1-505, 2-505, 1-508	2-321	B/1-17	C/307	58	82 Spt Bn	0-75 Ranger, A/82 Avn Bn, 3 Plat/82 MP Co
1st Bde (Sep), 101st Abn Div Vietnam; 1965-67	1-327, 2-327, 2-502, 3-503	2-320	A/2-17	A/326	B/501	101 Spt Bn	—
3d Bde, 101st Abn Div (Air Aslt) Ft Campbell, KY; 1972-74	1-503, 2-503, 3-187†	—	—	—	—	504 QM Co (Aerial Delivery)	—
36th Abn Bde Texas National Guard; 1973-80	1-143, 2-143	—	—	—	—	—	1136 Inf Det (Pfdr)
71st Abn Bde (Sep) Texas National Guard; 1968-73	1-143, 2-143, 3-143	1-133	A-124	271	—	371 Spt Bn	71 Bde Avn Sec
173d Abn Bde (Sep) Vietnam; 1963-72	1-503, 2-503, 3-503, 4-503, 1-50 (Mech)†	3-319	E-17	173	534 ¹	173 Spt Bn	B-75 Ranger, D-16 AR ² , 335 Avn Co

A/M Airborne/Mechanized

† Assigned non-airborne unit

¹ Replaced 173d Sig. Co. (Prov), which existed from July 1967-Dec. 1968.

² Disbanded and provided assets for Tuy Hoa Armor Co. (Prov), which existed from April 1968-Nov. 1969.



Pocket



Shoulder

A jumpmaster corrects a member of the 3d Bn., 508th Inf. during pre-jump refresher training, Panama, 1963. Though difficult to see, the jumper wears a unit patch on his left pocket and the old 508th ARCT patch on his shoulder rather than the 193d Inf. Bde's.



1969. It was now designated the 101st Abn. Div. (Airmobile), and, very briefly in 1969, the 101st Air Cav. Division.

The 101st was to remain in Vietnam until it began returning home in Dec. 1971, with the last elements departing in Feb. 1972. Upon returning to Ft Campbell elements of the 3d Brigade were placed on jump status to carry on the traditions of the 173d Abn. Bde.; but the 3d Brigade did not actually carry on the lineage of the 173d as is sometimes reported. These elements were taken off jump status in 1974. It has since maintained a Pathfinder element, and Co. E (Aerial Equipment Repair and Supply) of the 426th Supply and Service Battalion. The division was redesignated 101st Abn. Div. (Air Assault) on 4 Oct. 1974 and is still a non-airborne formation, the title being retained for traditional reasons.

XVIII Abn. Corps remained part of the STRAC during this period, overseeing a number of combat divisions. On 29 April 1965 the corps headquarters and other elements were deployed to the Dominican Republic to act as the joint headquarters for all US forces on the island. It later maintained control over the Inter-American Peace Force, a

multinational organization with contingents from six Latin American countries in addition to US forces. The corps returned to Ft Bragg in Jan. 1966. In the late 1960s the corps exercised command over both Regular Army and ARNG units employed for civil disturbance control. In 1978 the corps was tasked as the key headquarters for the Rapid Deployment Force, in effect re-establishing the STRAC concept.

Several major units were assigned to XVIII Abn. Corps during this period, most possessing few if any subordinate airborne units. The **20th Engr. Bde.**, serving in Vietnam from 1967 to 1971, was reactivated at Ft Bragg and designated airborne in 1974. Its 47th Engr. Bn. (Abn.) was redesignated the 27th in 1972. The XVIII Abn. Corps Artillery had existed since 1951 and controlled all assigned artillery units; the **18th Field Arty. Bde. (Abn.)** was formed from XVIII Abn. Corps Artillery in 1978. The 35th Signal Gp. had been assigned to the corps since 1967; in 1979 it was reorganized and redesignated **35th Signal Bde. (Corps) (Abn.)**. The 16th MP Gp. was assigned to XVIII Abn. Corps in 1972 after serving in Vietnam since 1966. The existing Forces Command Intelligence Gp. was reorganized and redesignated 18th



A 101st Abn. Div. master Sgt. armed with an M14 rifle wears the olive green fatigues with the black on white name tape, Ft Campbell, early 1960s.

Combat Intel. Gp. (Prov.) in 1971 to control MI and Army Security Agency (electronic warfare) units. In 1979 it was moved to Ft Bragg and reorganized and redesignated **525th MI Gp. (Corps) (Abn)** (525th MI Gp. had served in Vietnam from 1965 to 1973). Corps service support units were under the 5th Logistical Command until it was reorganized and redesignated 12th Support Bde. in 1966. In 1975 this brigade was reorganized and redesignated 1st Corps Support Command.

A number of airborne brigades, battalions and companies, subordinate to non-airborne higher headquarters, were formed during this period. The **1st Bde. (Abn./Mech.), 8th Inf. Div. (Mech.)** was activated on 27 March 1963 when the division was reorganized under ROAD. It assumed the airborne mission of the former 'Abn. Bde.', 8th Inf. Division. The brigade was unique in that its two airborne battalions (1- and 2-509th Inf.) were organized under a modified TOE as both airborne and mechanized. The concept was not entirely successful. Paratroopers assigned to the brigade had no previous experience with high-speed mechanized operations, or the extensive maintenance requirements. Most paratroopers to this day shudder at the thought of having to be around mechanized units—they're noisy, and they draw fire. Likewise, maintenance and support personnel assigned to the brigade had little desire to endure jump school. It was not unusual for airborne-qualified officers with previous mechanized experience to be assigned, but they had never served in an airborne unit, having earned their jumpwings after OCS ('five-jump commandos'). While well versed in mechanized tactics, they had little grasp of the complexities of large-scale airborne assaults. The unit conducted such absurd training scenarios as jumping in on an exercise with their APCs awaiting them on the ground—where they had been hauled by rail—and conducting a mobile defence. This is not to say the unit was ineffective, but such a merging of two drastically different philosophies and means of tactical employment

certainly limited its effectiveness. Stationed at Lee Barracks, Mainz-Gonsenheim, the brigade was to perform all the airborne contingency missions assigned it by US Army, Europe, and NATO. Its 5th Bn. (Abn.), 81st Field Arty. was stationed at Idar-Oberstein. A non-airborne tank battalion was also a component of the brigade. On 31 Aug. 1973 the brigade's airborne elements were redesignated and their jump status removed, reverting them to a purely mechanized rôle.

In order to maintain some form of airborne capability in Europe, 3-509th Inf. was formed at Rhine Kaserne, Wiesbaden, on 15 Jan. 1973. It was relocated to Caserma Carlo Ederle in Vicenza, Italy, and co-located with Headquarters, Southern European Task Force (SETAF). Organized as a battalion combat team (BCT), it was reinforced with additional service support and combat support elements, including a 105mm howitzer battery (Battery D). On 1 Sept. 1973 it was redesignated **1st Bn. (Abn.), 509th Inf. (BCT)**. The BCT was tasked with various contingency missions to include the US contribution to NATO's Allied Mobile Force (Land), an air-transportable force intended for employment on either NATO's southern or northern flanks.

The **11th Air Assault Div. (TEST)** was formed at Ft Benning on 15 Feb. 1963. Its purpose was to test the concepts, operational techniques, aircraft, and equipment for an airmobile division capable of transporting one-third of its combat elements in a single helicopter lift. The 11th was far from a full-strength formation, having only one brigade of infantry plus various support units. For multi-brigade exercises additional battalions were borrowed from the 2d Inf. Division. On 1 Oct. 1963 selected divisional units were made airborne. Of the division's three infantry battalions only one was airborne, but the other two were to provide the assets for the 1st Cavalry Div.'s airborne battalions. The tests were highly successful, and the decision was taken to add an airmobile division to the force structure.

The 11th Air Assault Div. was absorbed into the newly formed 1st Cav. Div. (Airmobile) on 15 July 1965. The new division's **1st Bde. (Abn.), 1st Cav. Div.** was composed of three airborne infantry and one artillery battalions. Other combat support and service support units were also parachute-qualified in order to field a complete airborne brigade. Given only three months to prepare for combat, the 1st Brigade arrived in Vietnam on 12 Sept. 1965 by sea-lift. The brigade operated with the rest of the 1st Cav. principally in the Central Highlands, making good use of its airmobility. In October 1966 the brigade's units were taken off jump status. Few of the troopers were now paratrooper qualified due to casualties and the one-year duty tour. The brigade returned to the States with the division in April 1971.

The **173d Abn. Bde. (Sep)** was the second combined arms brigade formed under the ROAD structure. Separate brigades were envisioned for employment similar to the earlier regimental combat teams. They could operate independently under a corps or other higher headquarters, or they could be attached to a division. The 173d was activated on 26 March 1963 and stationed on Okinawa as a Pacific regional reaction force, the sole US airborne combat unit in the Pacific basin. The brigade, initially composed of only two infantry battalions, conducted extensive training exercises throughout the region. Gen. Westmoreland requested the deployment of the 173d to Vietnam on a temporary basis in April 1965, expecting it to be relieved by a brigade from the 101st Abn. Division. Though the Marines had been in Vietnam for some

1: PFC, Parachute Test Platoon, Ft Benning, 1940
2: Pvt., Parachute Test Platoon, Ft Benning, 1940

3: Sgt., 501st Parachute Battalion, Ft Benning, 1941
4: Corporal, 502d Parachute Battalion, Ft Bragg, 1941





1



2



3

1: PFC, 2nd Bn., 503d Parachute Inf. Regt., England, 1942
 2,3: 2d Lieut., 505th Parachute Inf. Regt., North Africa and over Sicily, 1943

B

VOLSTAD

1: Corporal, 509th Parachute Inf. Bn., Anzio, 1944
2: Forceman, 1st Special Service Force, Italy, 1943



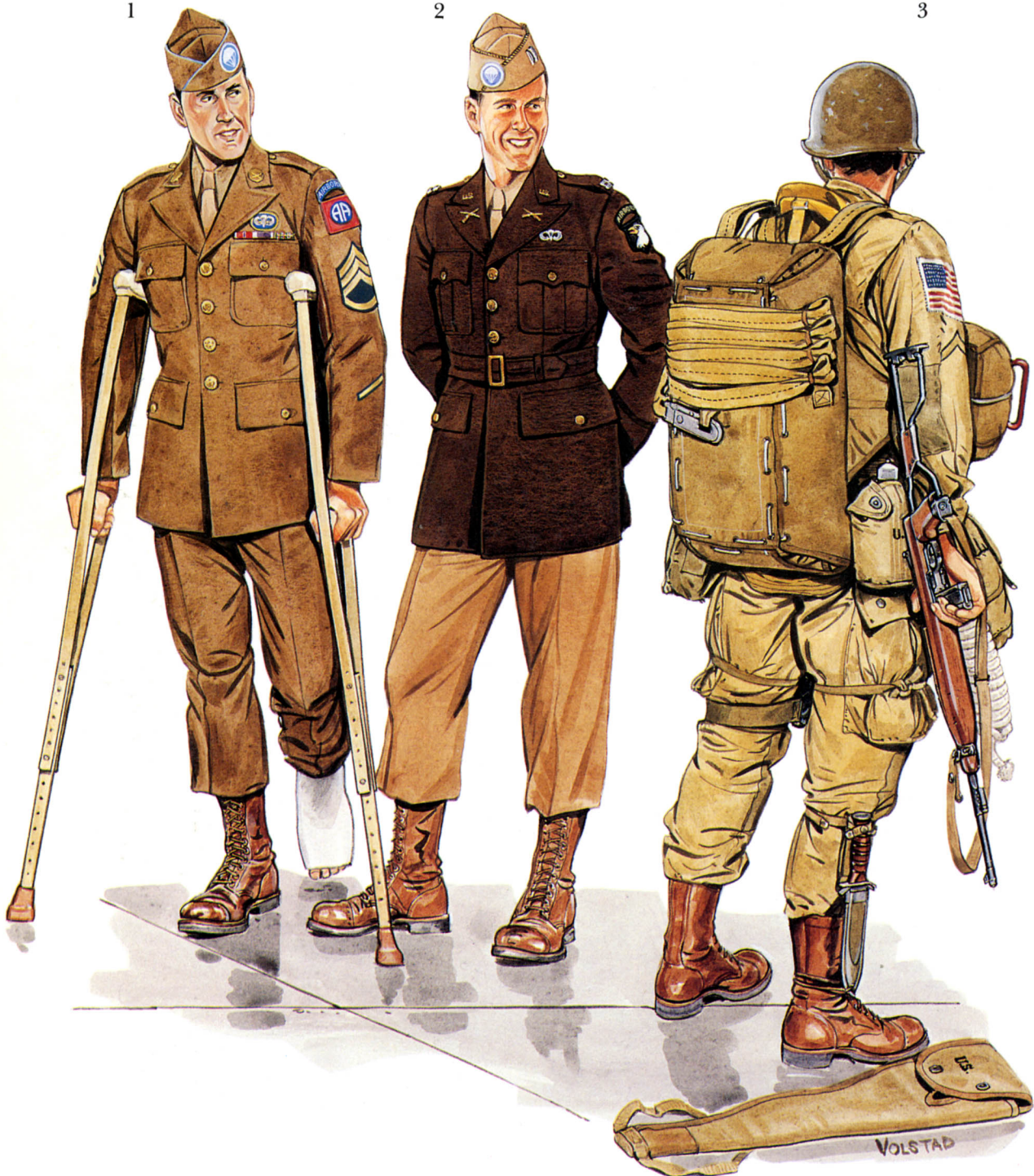
3: Staff Sgt., 1st Special Service Force, Ft Harrison, Mont., 1943
4: 1st Bn., 551st Parachute Inf. Regt., Southern France, 1944

- 1: Staff Sgt., 504th Parachute Inf. Regt., England, 1944
- 2: Capt., 501st Parachute Inf. Regt., England, 1944
- 3: PFC, Co. B, 307th Abn. Engr. Bn., England, 1944

1

2

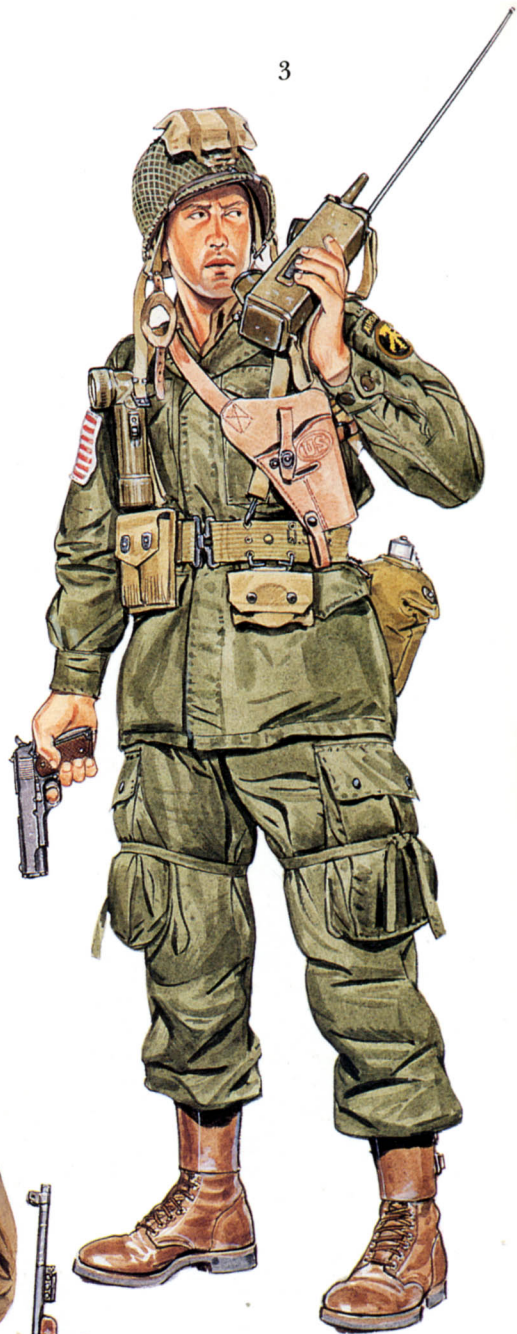
3



- 1: Pathfinder Group, 101st Abn. Div., Normandy, 1944
2: Corporal, 327th Glider Inf. Regt., Normandy, 1944
3: 1st Lieut., 376th Parachute Field Arty. Bn., Normandy, 1944



- 1: Sgt., 508th Parachute Inf. Regt., Holland, 1944
- 2: PFC, 501st Parachute Inf. Regt., Bastogne, 1944
- 3: Captain, 517th Parachute Inf. Regt., Germany, 1945



YOLSTAD

- 1: Corporal, 1st Special Service Force, Kiska, 1943
- 2: PFC, 503d Parachute Inf. Regt., Nadzab, 1944
- 3: PFC, 511th Parachute Inf. Regt., Luzon, 1945



1,2: Corporal, 187th Abn. Regt'l. Combat Team, Korea, 1951

3: PFC, 187th Abn. Regt'l. Combat Team, Korea, 1953





1: Technician 3, 511th Parachute
 Inf. Regt., Japan, 1946
 2: Specialist 3, 1st Battle Gp.,
 187th Inf., Lebanon, 1958
 3: Sgt., 1st Battle Gp.,
 502d Inf., Ft. Campbell, 1959
 4: Sgt., 82d Abn. Div.,
 Ft. Bragg, 1952

1: PFC, 1st Bde., 101st Abn. Div., Vietnam, 1965

2: Specialist 4, 173d Abn. Bde., Vietnam, 1968

3: PFC, 3d Bde., 82d Abn. Div., Vietnam, 1970



1: Sgt., 82d Abn. Div., Ft Bragg, 1978
2: PFC, 82d Abn. Div., Grenada, 1983
3: Specialist 4, 82d Abn. Div., Panama, 1989





1

1: Instructor, Airborne Dept.,
Ft Benning, 1973
2: Rigger, 36th Abn. Bde.,
Austin, Tex., 1978



2

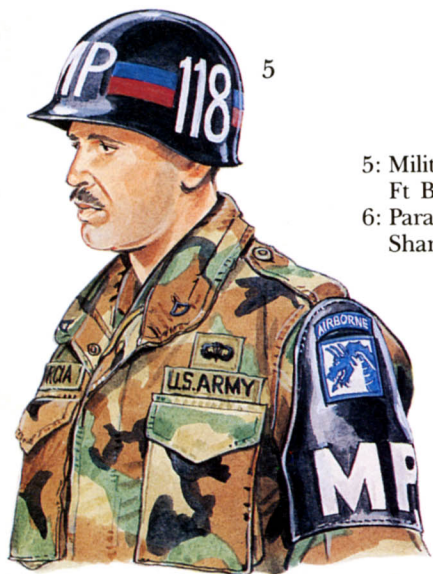


3

3: Pathfinder, Co. C, 509th Inf.,
Ft Rucker, Ala., 1982
4: Paratrooper, 3d Bn., 325th Inf.,
Vicenza, Italy, 1990



4



5

5: Military Policeman, 118th MP Co.,
Ft Bragg, 1988
6: Paratrooper, 82d Abn. Div.,
Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, 1989



6

VOLSTAD

months, the 173d was the first Army combat unit to be deployed. The brigade began arriving by air at Bien Hoa on 7 May.

The 173d served throughout Vietnam, for five and a half years, being employed extensively as a 'fire brigade'. Sent into many of the most difficult trouble spots, the 173d proved to be one of the most effective combat units engaged. The brigade grew in strength, becoming the largest separate brigade in the Army—up to five manoeuvre battalions were at times assigned. The 3- and 4-503d Inf. were assigned in Oct. 1967 and June 1966 respectively. Extensive efforts were made to maintain it fully airborne qualified in case such a capability was needed. On 22 Feb. 1967 the 2-503d Inf.; Bty. A, 3-319th Arty.; and elements of the Bde. HHC jumped into Drop Zone Red outside Katum. The only large-scale US combat jump of the war, it was executed in support of eight other US and allied battalions inserted by helicopter. The 173d departed Vietnam on 25 Aug. 1971, with the colours being moved to Ft Campbell, where it was inactivated on 14 Jan. 1972. The brigade was at zero strength while at Ft Campbell.

Two airborne infantry battalions were formed in the Army National Guard (ARNG) in 1965 from existing non-airborne battalions. The **1st Bn. (Abn.), 151 Inf.** was assigned to Indiana's 38th Inf. Div. and the **1st Bn. (Abn.), 225 Inf.** to Michigan's 46th Inf. Division. Though both battalions were designated Selected Reserve Force units, they were among their divisions' manoeuvre battalions rather than destined for attachment to a larger airborne formation. Both battalions' assets were used to form two long-range patrol companies in Dec. 1969 and Feb. 1968 respectively.

It had been decided to concentrate the ARNG's airborne assets into a single unit, providing more utility than merely having battalions assigned to 'straight leg' divisions. A complete airborne brigade was authorized and offered to different states. The choice was narrowed down to Texas and Arkansas; Texas won (or lost, according to many state headquarters bureaucrats) and on 15 Jan. 1968 the **71st Abn. Bde. (Sep)** was formed. Using north-east and south-east Texas assets of the disbanded 36th Inf. Div., the brigade was headquartered in Houston. The 71st was among the units making up the Selected Reserve Force, which received newer equipment, additional training man-days and funds.

In 1973 the Texas ARNG was reorganized and the bulk of the four existing separate brigades absorbed into the reactivated 49th Armd. Division. The 71st was reduced to two battalions and redesignated the **36th Abn. Bde.** on 1 Nov. 1973. Its HHC was organized as a divisional brigade rather than a separate one. In 1976 the unit was placed in the CAPSTONE Program to augment the 82d Abn. Div., in effect becoming its fourth brigade. The brigade, and earlier the 71st, had always conducted joint training with the 82d, and this was now increased. In 1979 it was determined there was no longer a need for a reserve airborne brigade, which the 82d disputed, and this highly proficient unit was disbanded on 1 April 1980, its battalions being converted to other units.

The 173d Abn. Bde. prepares to jump, early 1960s, Okinawa. Lightweight rucksacks are secured under their reserves while M1951 weapons containers are attached to their left sides. The parachutes are T-10s, but packed in modified T-7A containers. (82d Abn. Div. Ass'n.)





A 101st Abn. Div. trooper waiting to board a jump aircraft, early 1960s. Note the individually added extra leg pockets. To his right is a weapons and individual equipment container (WIEC, pronounced 'wick') designed for jumping crew-served weapons and other heavy loads.

Recently the question of forming another reserve airborne brigade has risen. If it is ever accomplished, it will not be in Texas, due to political pressure from the state headquarters.

The 193d Inf. Bde. (Sep) was the first combined arms brigade formed under ROAD, activated on 8 Aug. 1962. Stationed at Ft Kobbe, Panama Canal Zone, it was (and is) the principal defence force for the canal. On the same date **3d Bn. (Abn.), 508th Inf.** was activated as one of its component battalions. The unit was to provide an airborne capability to US Army Forces, Southern Command. The battalion was inactivated on 26 June 1968 and its assets used to form 3-5th Inf., which maintained its Company A on jump status.

The **171st and 172d Inf. Bdes. (Sep)** were activated at Forts Wainwright and Richardson, Alaska, respectively in July 1963. In April 1965 selected brigade infantry battalions' Companies C (known as 'Charlie Airborne') were placed on jump status: 171st Inf. Bde's. 4-9th Inf. (redesignated 6-9th Inf. in Dec.) at Ft Wainwright; and 172d Inf. Bde's. 4-23d Inf. and 1-60th Inf. at Ft Richardson. While providing US Army, Alaska, with a limited airborne capability, the placing of the companies in different battalions prevented a viable battalion-sized airborne force with appropriate support from being employed. The 4-9th Inf. was reactivated at Ft Richardson in Dec. 1970, but without an airborne company.

The 6-9th Inf. was inactivated in Nov. 1972 (followed by the 171st Inf. Bde. on 1 Nov. 1973) and its Company C transferred to 4-9th Infantry.

The Airborne Course was conducted by the Infantry School's Airborne Department at Ft Benning. Airborne students were attached to the 4th Student Bn. (Abn.), The Student Bde.

The only other airborne rifle company during this period was Co. E (Abn.), 30th Inf. assigned to the Aviation Center and School at Ft Rucker, Alabama. Activated on 23 Aug. 1966 as a long-range patrol unit, it was converted to an airborne rifle company on 16 Jan. 1969. On 1 July 1978 its assets were consolidated with the 5th Inf. Det. (Pathfinder) and used to form Co. C (Pfd.), 509th Inf., which had no association with 1-509th Inf. in Italy.

The 109th QM Co. (Aerial Delivery), from Ft Cambell, served in Vietnam from 1966 to 1972. The 623d QM Co. (Air Equipment Repair Depot), formed at Ft Bragg, served in Vietnam from 1966 to 1968. A number of Army Reserve airborne quartermaster companies, composed of parachute riggers, also existed during the 1960s and 1970s; 421st, 824th, and 775th QM Cos. (Aerial Delivery) and 263d, 431st, 861st, and 883d QM Cos. (Air Equipment Repair and Supply).

Throughout the post-Vietnam era a number of critics questioned the need for airborne units, stating that helicopters and airlift made the concept obsolete. While some believe that parachute delivery is no longer a viable option, having been made obsolete by the helicopter, they fail to take into consideration that without nearby advance bases with secure airfields, helicopters cannot deliver a force. An airborne force can be flown halfway around the world and delivered to a trouble spot without the initial need for a friendly regional airfield.

Occasional studies were undertaken, with recommendations ranging from maintaining only a single active brigade with paratroopers rotating through it, to suggesting that the Army should maintain only general-purpose forces while the Marine Corps took over specialized rôles such as airborne and airmobile—a concept the latter service balked at. None of these were taken seriously, and the airborne forces continued to be maintained, and in some categories, expanded.

Army of Excellence

The Army somehow struggled through the turmoils of the 1970s and emerged into the 1980s preparing to introduce a new force structure better suited to employ the advanced technology weapons and command and control systems it was beginning to receive. The 1970s had been a tough time indeed: Vietnam had all but devastated the Army's very fibre. It was not the same army that went to war in the mid-1960s. But the drug and race problems had been dealt with, discipline and pride had been re-established, and the integration of women and the conversion to an all-volunteer force¹ had been handled.

The basic ROAD structure was to be retained, but a number of major changes were planned for the future divisions under a plan known as 'Division 86', later to evolve

¹ For more details on the current US Army, see Elite 20, *Inside the US Army Today*.

into an expanded programme, 'Army of Excellence', (AoE); Division 86 itself had been spawned by the 1976 Division Restructuring Study. Division 86 got off to a rather shaky start in 1980. Each service school was tasked with developing the initial proposed TOE of their branches' divisional units. All the stops were pulled out, and subordinate unit TOEs were prepared with greatly inflated strengths and overly equipment oriented. What resulted was a division structure so massive and awkward to manoeuvre on the battlefield that, for all its combat power, it would have been almost unmanageable. So large were the proposed divisions that if the 18 divisions and supporting corps units had been so reorganized, the Army would have found itself short by 200,000 troops! Fortunately, the Department of the Army brought this chain of events to a halt in 1983, issued more constrained manning and equipment guidelines, and started over.

The result was a division structure not unlike ROAD but with additional combat multipliers, more streamlined, and designed to maximize the effectiveness of new advanced weapons and command and control systems, and to meet increased maintenance and logistical needs. While fielding more firepower, the new divisions actually have a smaller troop strength than their predecessors.

The airborne division was restructured over a period of several years beginning in 1985. Outwardly it is similar to the later ROAD airborne division. Its overall troop strength has fallen to about 12,500—not surprising since each past reor-

ganization alternated with the airborne division being either enlarged or reduced. The key differences were: elimination of the three-brigade anti-armour companies (their assets absorbed into the infantry battalions); reduction of the target acquisition battery to a detachment; and elimination of the administration and finance companies, and material support centre (their assets being absorbed by other divisional and corps units). All units have had their internal structure altered to some degree.

A major change, for all AoE divisions, is the addition of an aviation brigade. The 82d Abn. Div. Aviation Bde., activated in 1986, is composed of one each attack and assault helicopter battalions plus an air cavalry squadron. The latter was converted from an armoured cavalry unit and was formerly directly under division control. The divisional aviation brigade concept had its origins with the air cavalry combat brigade tested by the 1st Cav. Div. at Ft Hood in 1972–75. This fourth brigade does far more than provide aviation support. It uses its high-speed mobility and firepower to provide the division with a covering force or flanking screen in addition to conducting reconnaissance missions. Ground manoeuvre battalions may also be attached to it.

In heavy divisions the manoeuvre brigades are supported by dedicated division support command forward support battalions capable of providing combat logistical support. The airborne division, and other light divisions, have common branch service support battalions; maintenance, med-

Separate Airborne Infantry Battalions, 1965–90

<i>Unit</i>	<i>Served</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Parent Unit</i>	<i>Assets Source</i>
1–151 Inf	1965–68	Various towns, Indiana	38th Inf Div (Indiana NG)	1–151 Inf (non-abn)
1–225 Inf	1965–68	Detroit area, Michigan	46th Inf Div (Michigan NG)	1–225 Inf (non-abn)
3–508 Inf	1962–68	Ft Kobbe, Panama CZ	193d Inf (Sep)	New unit
2/187 Inf	1984–87	Ft Kobbe, Panama CZ	193d Inf Bde (Sep)	3–5 Inf (non-abn, except Co A from 1968–84)
1/508 Inf	1987–present	Ft Kobbe, Panama CZ	193d Inf Bde (Sep)	2–187 Inf (redesignated)
3–509 Inf	1973	Wiesbaden, Ger./Vincenza, Italy	USAEUR & SETAF	Personnel from 1–509 & 2–509 Inf, 8th Inf Div (M)
1–509 Inf	1973–83	Vincenza, Italy	SETAF & AMF (L)	3–509 Inf (redesignated)
1/509 Inf	1987–present	Little Rock AFB, Arkansas	JRIC	New Unit (HHC, Cos. A + B) (Opposing forces unit)
4/325 Inf	1983–86	Vincenza, Italy	SETAF & AMF (L)	1–509 Inf (redesignated)
3/325 Inf	1986–present	Vincenza, Italy	SETAF & AMF (L)	4/325 Inf (redesignated)
1/501 Inf	1989–present	Ft Richardson, Alaska	6th Inf Div (Lt)	C/4/327, C/5/327, C/6/327 Inf (reorganization)
1/507 Inf (Abn Tng)	1985–present	Ft Benning, Georgia	Inf School	4th Abn Student Tng Bn, The School Bde

USAREUR – US Army Europe

SETAF – US Army Southern European Task Force

AMF (L) – Allied Mobile Force (Land)

JRIC – Joint Readiness Training Center



Hooked up and ready to go, 101st Abn. Div. troopers prepare to exit a C-123 in the mid-1960s. M1950 weapons containers can be seen on the men's left sides.

Riggers of the 101st Abn. Div.'s 327th Prcht. Supply and Maint. Co. prepare a 90mm M59 'Scorpion' assault gun for airdrop, mid-1960s.



ical, and supply and transport. Forward Area Support Teams (FASTs) are formed, with each of these battalions contributing one company.

Airborne infantry battalions are composed of an HHC with communications, support, medical, scout, and 81mm mortar platoons plus the battalion staff. The three rifle companies have three rifle platoons and a 60mm mortar section. The anti-armor company has five platoons with TOW missile systems.

AoE Airborne Division, 1990

Division HHC	Supply & Transport Bn.
<i>Brigade HHC</i> (× 3)	HQ & Supply Co.
Inf. Bn. (× 9 in division)	Forward Supply Co.
HHC	(× 3)
Rifle Co. (× 3)	Motor Transport Co.
Anti-armor Co.	Aviation Maint. Co.
<i>Aviation Bde. HHC</i>	<i>Division Troops</i>
Attack Helicopter Bn.	Light Tank Bn.
HQ & Svc. Co.	HHC
Attack Helicopter Co.	Light Tank Co. (× 3)
(× 3)	Engineer Combat Bn.
Assault Helicopter Bn.	HHC
HQ & Svc. Co.	Engineer Combat Co.
Assault Helicopter Co.	(× 3)
(× 3)	Signal Bn.
Air Cav. Sdn.	HHC
HHT	Command
Air Recon. Trp. (× 3)	Communications Co.
Recon. Trp., Ground	Forward
<i>Division Artillery</i>	Communications Co.
HHB, DIVARTY	ADA Bn., Vulcan/Stinger
Field Arty. Bn., 105mm	HHB
Towed (× 3)	ADA Bty. (× 3)
HHB	MI Bn.
Howitzer Bty. (× 3)	HQ, HQ & Opns. Co.
Field Arty. Det., Target	Collection & Jamming
Acquisition	Co.
<i>Division Support Command</i>	Intel. & Surveillance
HHC, DISCOM	Co.
Maint. Bn.	Service Support Co.
HQ & Light Maint. Co.	Long-Range
Forward Support Co.	Surveillance Det.
(× 3)	MP Co.
Heavy Maint. Co.	Chemical Co.
Medical Bn.	Smoke/Decon
HQ & Support Co.	
Forward Medical Co.	
(× 3)	

Airborne units, 1980–90

The **82d Abn. Div.** has remained in the forefront of America's defence preparedness. Scores of exercises have been conducted to prepare it for its rapid deployment mission, including deployments to Egypt, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Panama, Spain, Turkey, and across the nation. In 1981 the 82d began rotating battalions (along with other units) to the Sinai Peninsula on three-month tours as the American contribution to the UN's Multinational Force and Observers (MFO).

In late Oct. 1983 the bulk of the 82d was assault air-landed on the south Caribbean island of Grenada¹ to oust a



Troopers of the 82d Abn. Div. in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, May 1965. Most wear no insignia on their fatigues. Their weapons include M16 rifles, an M60 machine gun, and M26 grenades.

dictatorial Cuban-backed government. The 1st and 2d Bns. (Ranger), 75th Inf. parachuted on to the Port Salines Airport to rescue endangered US medical students. The 82d's 1st and 2d Brigades along with a large portion of divisional support units were airlifted in to complete the operation.

Late December 1989 found elements of the 82d deployed to Panama² along with other light forces, to unseat an illegally installed dictator and re-establish a responsible government. A major portion of the 82d Abn. Div., 75th Ranger Regt., and other Army units were committed in Panama.

XVIII Abn. Corps is the Army's principal contingency corps. Structured for low- and mid-intensity conflicts, the corps is the main formation under the Third US Army, the Army component of the joint service US Central Command, formerly the Rapid Deployment Force, formed in 1978. Its headquarters and many subordinate units participated in Grenada and Panama.

The corps' subordinate units have been steadily upgraded since the 1970s. Most corps support units were formerly assigned to branch-specific groups composed of several battalions plus separate companies and detachments. Beginning in the 1970s these groups were up-graded to brigades with improved command and control capabilities, and designated Airborne—perhaps rather presumptuously, since usually only one of each brigades' subordinate units is airborne, along with some of the personnel in the brigade HHCs.

The 16th MP Gp. was reorganized and redesignated **16th MP Bde. (Abn.)** in 1981. In 1985 the 525th MI Gp. (Corps) (Abn.) was reorganized and redesignated **525th MI Bde. (Abn.)**. The **18th Avn. Bde. (Abn.)** was formed in 1987 from the 269th Avn. Bn. and additional aviation units assigned.

¹ For more information on Operation URGENT FURY, see MAA 159, *Grenada 1983*.

² For more information on Operation JUST CAUSE, see forthcoming Elite title *Panama 1989*.

The 20th Engr. Bde. (Abn.) and 35th Signal Bde. (Corps) (Abn.) are still active. One of the 18th Field Arty. Bde's. three howitzer battalions (1-39th FA) was converted to airborne in August 1987, making it the only air-droppable 155mm unit in the Army.

The **1st Corps Support Command** (1st COSCOM) controls all XVIII Abn. Corps' service support units to include maintenance, supply, transportation, personnel services, and medical. (It was designated 1st Support Command (SUPCOM) from 1980 to 1982 and then redesignated 1st COSCOM.) The only airborne units subordinate to 1st COSCOM are the 600th QM Co. (Airdrop, Equipment Repair and Supply) and 612th QM Co. (Aerial Delivery), plus a few personnel in the COSCOM HHC.

At Vicenza, Italy, 1st Bn. (Abn.), 509th Inf. was inactivated on 1 July 1983 and its assets used to form 4th Bn. (Abn.), 325th Inf., still subordinate to Southern European Task Force. In 1985 the unit's Battery D (105mm) was redesignated Bty. D (Abn.), 319th FA. On 16 Sept. 1986 the battalion was redesignated **3d Bn. (Abn.), 325th Infantry**.

A new **1st Bn. (Abn.), 509th Inf.** began formation at Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark., in Dec. 1987. It is tasked as the opposing forces (OPFOR) unit for the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at nearby Ft Chaffee. (The JRTC provides low-intensity conflict exercises for light infantry and special ops units.)

In Panama the 193d Inf. Bde's. 3-5th Inf. was redesignated 2d Bn. (Lt), 187th Inf. on 1 Oct. 1983 and its Company A maintained on jump status at Ft Kobbe. The battalion was



82D Airborne Division Order Of Battle – Post Vietnam

Unit	1984	1987	1990
1st Brigade			
Inf Bn	1-504 Inf	1/504 Inf	1/504 Inf
Inf Bn	2-504 Inf	2/504 Inf	2/504 Inf
Inf Bn	2-508 Inf	3/508 Inf	3/504 Inf
AT Co (TOW)	E-504 Inf	E/504 Inf	—
2d Brigade			
Inf Bn	1-325 Inf	1/325 Inf	1/325 Inf
Inf Bn	2-325 Inf	2/325 Inf	2/325 Inf
Inf Bn	3-325 Inf	4/325 Inf	4/325 Inf
AT Co (TOW)	E-325 Inf	E/325 Inf	—
3d Brigade			
Inf Bn	1-505 Inf	1/505 Inf	1/505 Inf
Inf Bn	2-505 Inf	2/505 Inf	2/505 Inf
Inf Bn	1-508 Inf	3/505 Inf	3/505 Inf
AT Co (TOW)	E-505 Inf	E/505 Inf	—
Division Aviation			
Attack	—	20	1/82 Avn (Attack)
Helicopter Bn	—	—	2/82 Avn (Assault)
Aviation	82	82	1/17 Cav (Air Cav)
Combat Bn	—	—	—
Air Cav Sdn	—	—	—
Division Artillery			
105 mm How Bn	1-319 FA	1/319 FA	1/319 FA
105 mm How Bn	1-320 FA	2/319 FA	2/319 FA
105 mm How Bn	2-321 FA	3/319 FA	3/319 FA
Target Acq Unit	B-26 FA	B/26 FA	1 FA Det
Division Troops			
Tank Bn (Light)	4-68 Armor	3/73 Armor	3/73 Armor
Armd Cav Sqn	1-17 Cav	1/17 Cav	—
Air Defense Arty Bn	3-4 ADA	3/4 ADA	3/4 ADA
MI Bn (CEWI)	313	313	313
Signal Bn	82	82	82
Engr Combat Bn	307	307	307
Engr Co (Lt Equip)	618	618	—
MP Co	82	82	82
Division Support Command			
Medical Bn	782	782	782
QM Sup & Trans Bn	407	407	407
Ord Maint Bn	782	782	782
Admin Co	82	82	—
Finance Co	82	82	—
MMC*	182	182	—
Chemical Units	18 Det & 21 Co	14 Det & 21 Co	14 Det & 21 Co

* Material Management Center

The white striped black spot is a T-10 parachute's deployment bag with the canopy just emerging. Beneath it can be seen a canopy suffering from a 'line-over' or 'Mae West' malfunction (he made it okay). 1st Special Forces Gp., Okinawa, 1968. (author's collection)



A 71st Abn. Bde. jumpmaster assists with the donning of a T-10 parachute, 1971. Jumpmasters usually wear a black 'baseball cap' while performing their ground duties for identity purposes. This one wears an 82d Abn. Div. patch on

his right shoulder for service in the Dominican Republic. The red and white distinctive unit marker (here, Co. A, 2d Bn., 143d Inf.) on the jumper's helmet served to aid drop zone assembly. (Carl F. Murray)

IVIII Airborne Corps Units - 1990

16th Military Police Brigade (Abn)

118th MP Co (Corps)
(Abn)
503d MP Bn
21st MP Co
65th MP Co
108th MP Co

18th Field Artillery Brigade (Abn)

3d Bn (155 mm
Towed), 8th FA
5th Bn (155 mm
Towed), 8th FA
1st Bn (155 mm
Towed) (Abn), 39th
FA

18th Aviation Brigade (Corps) (Abn)¹

58th Air Traffic
Control Bn.

1st Bn, 58th Aviation
Regt (Corps)
118th Aviation Bn
(Command)
218th Aviation Bn
(Medium
Helicopter)
196th Aviation Co

20th Engineer Brigade (Abn)

27th Engr Bn (Cbt)
(Abn)²
37th Engr Bn (Cbt)
(Heavy)
Composite Engr Bn
(Provisional)
63d Engr Co
(Topographic)
116th Engr Co (Lt
Equip) (Abn)
264th Engr Co (Panel
Bridge)

30th Engr Det
283d Engr Det
(Terrain Analysis)
285th Engr Det
(Utility)

35th Signal Brigade (Abn)

25th Sig Bn
(Operations)
50th Sig Bn (Corps)
(Abn)
327th Sig Bn
(Support)
426th Sig Bn (Army
Area)
514th Sig Co

525th Military Intelligence Brigade (Abn)

224th MI Bn (Aerial
Exploitation) [Ft
Stewart, Ga.]
319th MI Bn
(Operations)
519th MI Bn (Tactical
Exploitation)
Co H (LRS), 122d Inf
[Ga. ARNG]
FORSCOM Intel Tng
Det

¹ Army aviation units are currently undergoing a major reorganization and designation change allowing them to convert to a regimental system. The units listed here are in the process of changing.

² Formed from the 47th Engr. Bn. (Combat) (Abn) in 1972.



A paratrooper's nightmare, trees and rocks. Members of the 36th Abn. Bde. attempt to untangle a T-10 canopy at Ft Chaffee, Ark., 1977. The anti-inversion netting can be seen on the canopy's skirt, designed to prevent suspension lines from slipping over the canopy. (author's collection)

inactivated on 1 May 1987, and on 10 July **1st Bn. (Abn.), 508th Inf.** was activated as a fully airborne unit, later to participate in the Panama invasion.

In Jan. 1983 the Alaskan-based 172d Inf. Bde's. 1-60th Inf., 4-23d Inf., and 4-9th Inf. were redesignated 4th, 5th, and 6th Bns. (Lt), 327th Inf. respectively and their Companies C retained on jump status. In 1986 the 172d Inf. Bde. was inactivated and its assets used to form the core of the 6th Inf. Div. (Lt). The airborne rifle companies began to assemble into a provisional task force to form the basis for the projected 4th Bn. (Abn.), 505th Inf. However, this did not take place until 1 Oct. 1989, when **1st Bn. (Abn.), 501st Inf.** was activated instead at Ft Richardson. The only other airborne unit in Alaska is the ARNG's Light Recon. Det. (Abn.), 207th Inf. Gp. (Scout) in Anchorage.

(The seemingly confused redesignations of the above units were inflicted in order to align them with the still fluctuating Army Regimental System, adopted in 1983.)

The US Army Reserve's (USAR) five Pathfinder platoons and the Army National Guard's (ARNG) five detachments are in the process of being phased out. A few active Pathfinder units will be retained to include a reduced strength Co. C, 509th Inf. at Ft Rucker, Alabama. The USAR also maintains the 421st and 824th QM Cos. (Airdrop and Supply) and the 431st and 861st QM Cos. (Airdrop, Equipment Repair and Supply) to support other commands in wartime. Active aerial delivery units include the 4th QM Det. in Korea and the 5th QM Det. in Germany. The **1st Bn. (Abn.), 507th Inf.** replaced the 4th Student Bn. (Abn.) as the airborne training unit in 1985.

The 1990s find the US Army Airborne to be very much alive and well, despite critics' accusations that the parachute is an outmoded means of tactical delivery. Within today's

Army—Active and Reserve Components, including conventional airborne combat and support, and special ops units—are approximately 65 battalion-sized units, 70 companies and detachments, and 25 group/brigade/division/command headquarters authorized on jump status. The new decade will undoubtedly prove to be one of drastic changes in world political, economic, and military power balances. The unparalleled changes sweeping through the communist world will continue, no doubt forcing a reorientation of focus by the principal military powers. While the US Army girds itself for wide-ranging reductions in its high intensity-oriented heavy forces, it is already obvious that its low-intensity light forces (airborne, air assault, light infantry and special ops) will be spared from the coming defence budget cuts, and even expanded.

The Plates

A1: PFC, Parachute Test Platoon, Ft Benning, 1940

America's first paratroopers were initially outfitted with standard aviator coveralls and the aviator's A-2 cloth toque helmet. Several models of jump boot were tested, some of these commercially available and used by the Forest Service's smoke jumpers. The parachute is the T-4; essentially a T-3, used for training aircrews, with the main chute modified for static line opening.

A2: Private, Parachute Test Platoon, Ft Benning, 1940

The garrison (or overseas) cap fell from general use within the Army following World War I, though retained by the Army Air Corps. In 1940 the Parachute Test Platoon was issued khaki garrison caps for wear while conducting ground training. Since the service hat ("Smokey Bear") was still in use, they soon began to wear the garrison cap with their khaki uniforms as a distinctive item. The platoon's volunteers were detached from the 29th Inf. Regt. and wore their unit's crest.

A3: Sergeant, 501st Parachute Bn., Ft Benning, 1941

After forming the battalion received a one-piece satin 'balloon cloth' jump suit fitted with zippered pockets accessible when the parachute was worn. The Riddle football helmet was modified with a special strap and a leather 'bib' provided to protect the throat from tree landings. The Riddle helmet was actually made of clear plastic and then painted, though some were issued unpainted. Jumpmasters usually wore Risistol M1938 goggles. An early model of Corcoran jump boots are worn. He is armed with a Thompson M1928A1 submachine gun with 50-round drum and a Colt M1917 revolver in an M1917 holster secured in a thigh pocket by a handkerchief.

A4: Corporal, 502d Parachute Bn., Ft Bragg, 1941

The M1941 prototype of the later standard paratrooper's uniform is worn by this trooper participating in pre-war manoeuvres. Though minor details differ, the major change was the design of the pockets. The name tape was non-standard. He is wearing the A-8 toque helmet, same as the A-2, but insulated. His equipment is composed of an M1 rifle, M1918 mounted cartridge belt, and M1910 canteen and carrier.

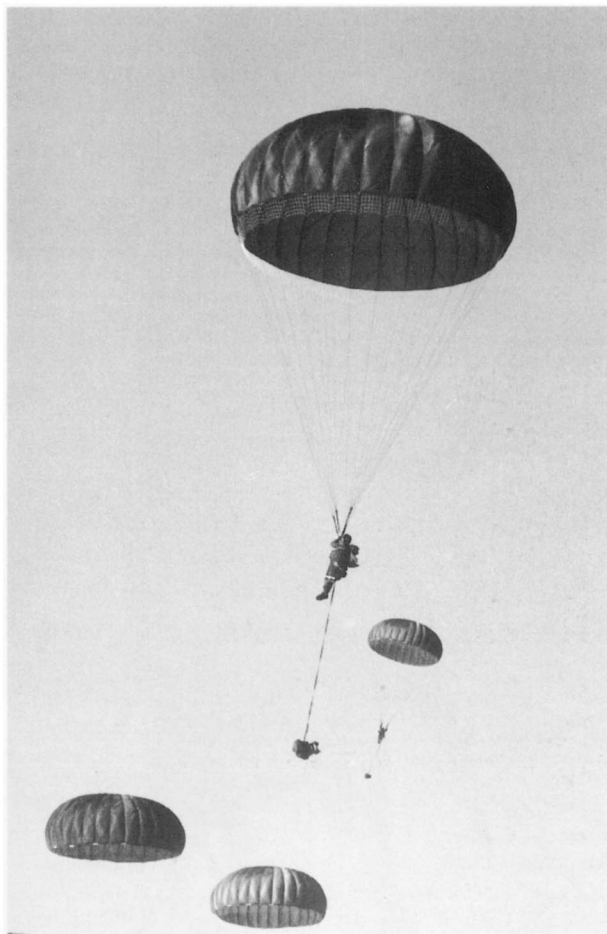
B1: PFC, 2nd Bn., 503d Parachute Inf. Regt., England, 1942

While in England the predecessor of the 509th Parachute Inf. used the standard issue M1942 paratrooper's uniform and helmet camouflaged with locally applied paint. The standard M1 helmet was still in use, not yet replaced by the modified paratrooper's M1C. He is armed with an M1 carbine, magazines for which he carries in small Air Force issue ammunition pouches (often incorrectly reported as locally fabricated, but a standard item). The M1936 field bag (more commonly known as a musette bag) was originally issued to officers in lieu of the burdensome M1928 haversack. From 1941 it was also issued to mountain and motorized troops, and paratroopers.

B2 and B3: 2d Lieutenant, 505th Parachute Inf. Regt., North Africa and over Sicily, 1943

Preparing for the jump into Sicily, this platoon leader is

The three-point quick release harness, used with the T-10 and MC1-1/B parachutes, was introduced in 1978. Pictured here without the reserve, the kit bag would be folded under the leg straps. It features easier donning, comfort, rapid removal, and enlarged reserve attachment 'D' rings to which equipment containers are also attached.



The olive green T-10 canopy fitted with anti-inversion netting. The parabolic-shaped canopy, designed to reduce oscillation, is 35 feet in diameter. The jumper's rucksack, previously attached under his reserve, is dropped on a 15-foot lowering line about 200 feet above the ground in order to prevent injury.

armed with a Thompson M1 submachine gun, which he will carry in the padded Griswold weapons container at his side. The parachute is the T-5, the mainstay of the parachute forces from 1941 to 1945; the first designed specifically for paratroopers. The B-4 life vest was worn under the parachute harness, which had to be removed before inflation or it would crush the jumper's chest.

C1: Corporal, 509th Parachute Inf. Bn., Anzio, 1944

Parachute units in the Mediterranean area retained the M1942 paratrooper's uniform even after it was replaced by other uniforms in Europe and the Pacific; they were issued the M1943 field uniform after their arrival in France. A common practice among some units was the wearing of Air Force flight jackets with a conspicuous unofficial unit insignia. For the 509th PIB, this took the form of the 'gingerbread man' insignia, also painted on the helmet.

C2: Foreceman, 1st Special Service Force, Italy, 1943

The FSSF received special issues of mountain and cold-weather clothing in view of their intended mission. This

force man is outfitted in the third model of mountain parka along with mountain trousers and climbing boots. Unique to the Force was the Johnson M1941 light machine gun, for which they had traded the Marine Corps two tons of RS demolition charges in exchange for 125 of the lightweight weapons. No magazine pouches were available for the Johnson and its 30-round magazines were simply carried in pockets.

A platoon radio-telephone operator of Co. A, 4th Bn., 325th Inf. on Malga Coe, Italy, 1984. The unit had just received the Gortex® cold-weather suit, over which are worn 'overwhites' snow camouflage and insulated vapour barrier boots. A foam sleeping pad is secured to the right side of his prototype field pack, internal frame (FPII). (Lawrence Lundt)



C3: Staff Sergeant, 1st Special Service Force, Ft Harrison, Mont., 1943

Both US and Canadian personnel of the Force wore standard US Army uniforms, but with certain embellishments; the red-white-blue shoulder aiguillette (made by unit riggers), garrison cap piping, and jumping oval. Canadians did wear collar discs with 'CANADA' rather than 'US'. Other than the jumping oval and jump boots, the Force did not wear any other of the period's usual airborne insignia and was never issued the M1942 paratrooper's uniform.

C4: 1st Bn., 551st Parachute Inf. Regt., Southern France, 1944.

The M1918A2 Browning Automatic Rifle was little used by parachute units due to its weight and the inability to rapidly assemble it after breaking it down for a jump. The parachute units in the Mediterranean area were among the few that sometimes used the M1928 haversack in lieu of the M1936 musette bag. Locally applied helmet camouflage paint was common among 1st Abn. Task Force units.

D1: Staff Sergeant, 504th Parachute Inf. Regt., England, 1944

The enlisted man's wool serge service uniform was normal wear for formations and off duty. The airborne cap badge (blue backed for infantry and red for artillery, other units wore the colour closest to their branch colour with no firmly established guidance. Some unofficial branch coloured versions were made) was the first insignia unique to the airborne; designed by 1st Lt. William Ryder, Parachute Test Plat. leader. A glider version was adopted in 1942 along with an airborne version depicting both the glider and parachute.

D2: Captain, 501st Parachute Inf. Regt., England, 1944

The officer's version of the wool service uniform, referred to as 'pinks and greens' was of a slightly different style and much different colour from the enlisted man's. Officers' glider and airborne cap insignia were manufactured mirroring enlisted men's from 1943 as they were required to be worn on the cap's right side with rank on the left.

D3: PFC, Co. B, 307th Abn. Engr. Bn., England, 1944

The folding stock M1A1 carbine, adopted in 1942, was not as widely used by the airborne as imagined, wood-stocked M1 carbines were actually in wider use. Initially, the engineer battalion was the only unit within the airborne division authorized them. A special scabbard was issued with the M1A1.

E1: Pathfinder Group, 101st Abn. Div., Normandy, 1944

Pathfinders were drawn from their parent regiments rather than formed into dedicated units as was British practice¹. Tasked with marking drop zones, most jumped into Normandy with Mohawk haircuts and war paint. Armed with a Thompson M1 submachine gun, he carries its magazines in a British contract-manufactured ammunition bag and a large Air Force ammunition pouch. Slung is an M-227 signal lamp used to identify drop zones by sending coded flashes to approaching troop transports. Developed by the British airborne, the No. 82-1 'gammon' grenade was also used by US paratroopers. It consisted of an impact fuse, activated by an arming tape, attached to a cloth bag that was packed with a variable amount of plastic explosive as required by the destruction task.

¹ For a brief history of the Pathfinders, see Osprey Elite 29, *Vietnam Airborne*.

E2: Corporal, 327th Glider Inf. Regt., Normandy, 1944

Glider troops were uniformed and equipped similar to regular infantry troops, in this instance, the wool field uniform, M1941 field jacket, M1943 combat boots, and leggings. The helmet is marked with a 101st Abn. Div. unit identification system. Most were issued the musette bag, here the improved 1943 model, rather than the M1928 haversack. The general-purpose ammunition bag, designed for 19 different ammunition items and grenades, was widely used by the airborne. The differences in uniforms was a continuing sore point with the glider troops. The prestige of the jump boots and parachute cap badge were so strong that in 1943 Maj. Gen. Ridgeway, commanding the 82d, authorized his staff to wear them if they undertook a single parachute jump (without completing full jump training), but not the jumpwings—they flocked to the chance. The 505th PIR, in retaliation, posted a notice that any paratrooper making a single glider landing was authorized to wear shoes and leggings!

E3: 1st Lieutenant, 376th Parachute Field Arty. Bn., Normandy, 1944

Like their infantry counterparts, the parachute 'red legs' wore the M1942 paratrooper's uniform. This officer has added protective patches to the knees and elbows, a fairly common practice. Another widespread practice was the attachment of the special parachute first aid packet (with field dressing, tourniquet, and morphine syrette) to the helmet's camouflage net. M3 binoculars are carried in the M17 case.

F1: Sergeant, 508th Parachute Inf. Regt., Holland, 1944

When the airborne divisions were returned to England after Normandy, they were outfitted with the M1943 field uniform, being among the first units to receive it. Though the paratrooper's uniform was popular, the Army was attempting to achieve uniform standardization and eliminate the wide variety of special-purpose uniforms. Its issue also served to eliminate much of the uniform differences between the parachutists and glider troops. Additionally the paratrooper uniform's light khaki shade proved to be ill-suited for European forests and night combat. The 'grease gun' or M3 submachine gun was not widely used by the airborne, the Thompson M1 being more popular, though heavier. The AL-141 signal panel (12ft x 32in.) was used to mark daylight drop and landing zones with letter codes; orange on one side and white on the other.

F2: PFC, 501st Parachute Inf. Regt., Bastogne, 1944

During the brutal Ardennes offensive the airborne were provided with whatever standard-issue winter clothing was available, here the wool overcoat and M1944 insulated shoepacs. The field telephone is the EE-8. The D ration packet, carried for emergency use, contained three vitamin-enriched chocolate bars.

F3: Captain, 517th Parachute Inf. Regt., Germany, 1945

The 17th Abn. Div. was issued the M1943 field uniform after it arrived in England. The standard M1943 combat boot was issued to airborne units as a replacement for the paratrooper boot; not a popular move; those possessing usable paratrooper boots retained them. In 1944 some non-airborne units were issued a fully laced combat boot not unlike the paratroopers'. Due to web gear shortages, the 17th went into combat with mostly older model equipment used in training rather than receiving a new issue as was normal practice. This officer is



An airborne student slides down a 200-foot cable after jumping from the 34-foot tower, Ft Benning. The tower teaches exit position, simulates opening shock, and mentally prepares the students for the real thing. (SP4 Ann McDonald, US Army)

armed with an M1911A1 pistol carried in the M7 shoulder holster. A TL-122 flashlight is attached to his braces and he is communicating on an SCR-536 radio, the 'handi-talki' (the 'walki-talki' was the backpacked model).

G1: Corporal, 1st Special Service Force, Kiska, 1943

Outfitted in the M1941 field jacket and mountain trousers, this Forceman wears the Army Task Force 9 (Kiska Task Force) patch under the FSSF patch. The Kiska patch was also worn on the right shoulder and even sewn on top of the FSSF patch. On his side is the V-42 Fairburn 'commando' knife, standard issue for the Force.

G2: PFC, 503d Parachute Inf. Regt., Nadzab, 1944

The M1942 paratrooper's uniform was also initially issued to parachute units in the Pacific. The separate 503d PIR's riggers developed a series of locally fabricated web gear, though by no means in wide distribution. Specially designed ammunition pouches were fitted to M1936 pistol belts, rather than using standard cartridge belts and magazine pockets, in an effort to increase the basic load. For riflemen this assembly was composed of five pockets, each with five cells, enabling the rifleman to carry 25 eight-round clips (edge-wise rather than flat) as opposed to eight clips in the M1928 cartridge belt. Those armed with Thompson submachine guns used two pockets of five cells, likewise with the magazines inserted edge-wise.

G3: PFC, 511th Parachute Inf. Regt., Luzon, 1945

As in Europe the airborne units in the Pacific had their M1942 paratrooper uniforms replaced, but with the M1943 herring-

bone twill jungle suit. A similar, but lighter weight poplin M1945 jungle suit was introduced just before VJ Day. He is also outfitted with the M1941 field cap and M1943 boots. This sniper is armed with an M1903A4 sniper rifle, used in all theatres.

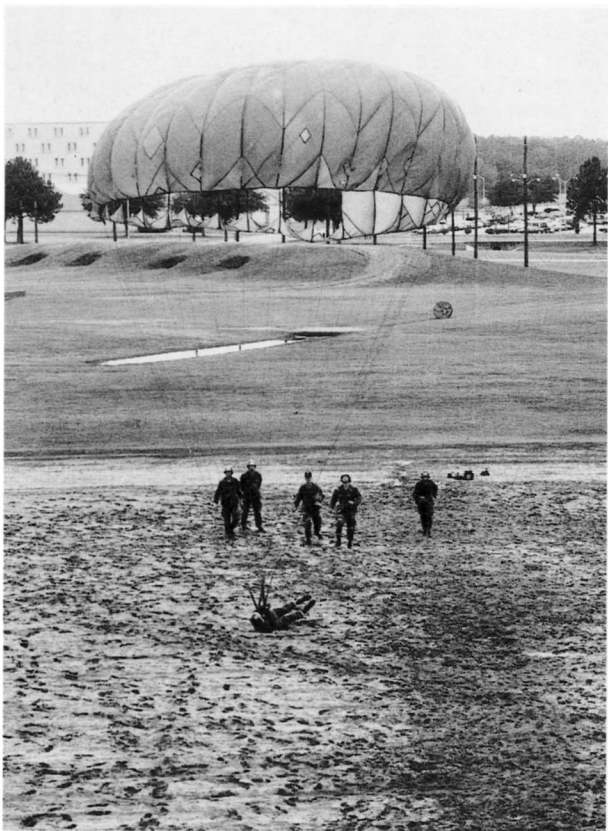
H1 and H2: Corporal, 187th Abn. Regt'l. Combat Team, Korea, 1951

The M1943 field uniform was still in use early in the Korean War. The T-7 parachute, adopted in 1944, was basically a T-5 fitted with a single-point box-type quick-release harness. The T-7A was a slightly modified version introduced in 1948. The Griswold weapons container was still in use, but soon replaced by the M1950 weapons case. The Griswold required the M1 rifle to be broken down while the M1950 was adjustable and would accept an assembled rifle. The unpopular 'goldenlite' rank insignia were used from 1948 to 1955, when World War II-style insignia were re-introduced. The 187th utilized a unique unit identification system painted on helmets.

H3: PFC, 187th Abn. Regt'l. Combat Team, Korea, 1953

The M1951 field uniform was similar to the M1943, but included numerous small improvements. Paratrooper-style boots were now being issued to most Army units, though the M1943 was still in limited use. The M1945 combat pack actually saw little service at the end of World War II, but by now was standard issue Army-wide. The 57mm M18 recoilless

A much patched training canopy, with steering vents, lowers a student gently to the ground during a 250-foot tower descent, Ft Benning.



rifle too was introduced at the end of World War II seeing limited service with the 17th Abn. Div. in Germany.

I1: Technician 3, 511th Parachute Inf. Regt., Japan, 1946

The 11th Abn. Div., while on occupation duty in Japan, wore the khaki service uniform and minimal web gear on guard duty and street patrols. The use of jumpwing ovals came into wider use after World War II. The use of ovals (officially, airborne background trimmings), was not officially recognized until 1949 and were not entered into the uniform regulations until 1956.

I2: Specialist 3, 1st Battle Gp., 187th Inf., Lebanon, 1958

Herringbone twill fatigues were now standard Army-wide having replaced wool field uniforms except in cold-weather regions. The '24th Abn. Bde's.' only battle group to be deployed to Beirut painted a camouflage pattern on their helmets. They also wore their metal jumpwings and oval in the field, this being before embroidered skill badges were approved. The 1st BG, 187th Inf. wore a red on black airborne tab while the '24th Abn. Bde's.' other units wore gold on black tabs. This specialist 3 (replaced by spec. 4 when the Army's rank system was restructured in 1958) is armed with a selective-fire M2 carbine.

I3: Sergeant, 1st Battle Gp., 502d Inf., Ft Campbell, 1959

The Army changed to black footwear in 1957 when the service uniform colour was changed from olive drab to Army green. The 101st had revived the World War II helmet unit identification system and added company designations. Though the World War II (re-introduced in 1955) rank insignia were replaced by the gold on Army green in 1957, the older versions were still sometimes worn on field uniforms. The name and US Army tapes were also introduced at this time. The greatly improved M1956 web gear was introduced in 1957 along with the M14 rifle.

I4: Sergeant, 82d Abn. Div., Ft Bragg, 1952

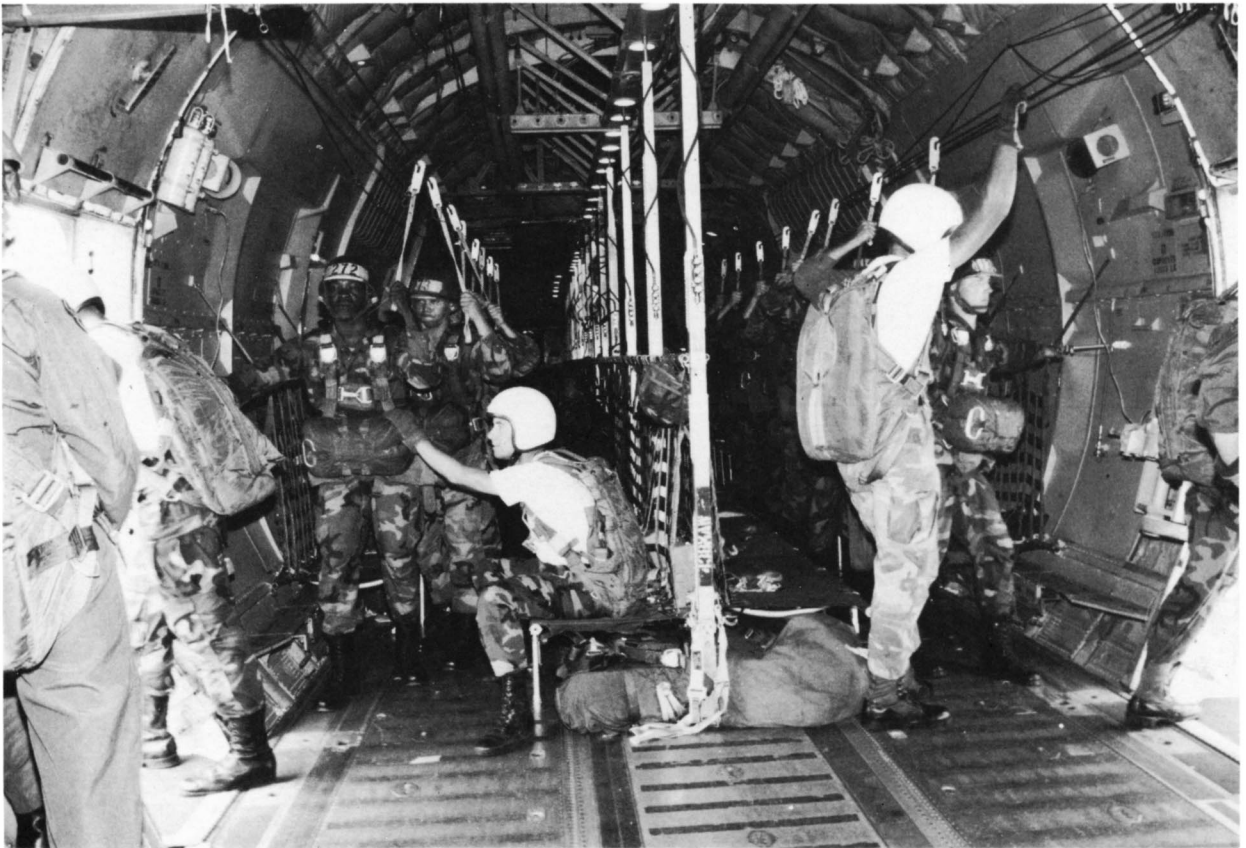
A special steel helmet was tested by the airborne in the early 1950s, but never adopted. Note the rank insignia are gold on blue, signifying a non-combat arms NCO; combat arms enlisted men wore reversed colour insignia. From 1948 to 1958 there was no three-chevron sergeant's rank. In 1958 the staff sergeant's rank (with three chevrons and a rocker) was reinstated and sergeants reverted to three chevrons.

J1: PFC, 1st Bde., 101st Abn. Div., Vietnam, 1965

Wearing the utility uniform, more commonly known as fatigues, this weapons squad member struggles to assemble a 3.5-inch M20A1B1 rocket launcher. Later this awkward weapon fell from general use being replaced by the M72 LAW (Light Anti-tank Weapon). Though the jungle fatigues (officially, tropical combat uniform) was adopted in 1963, its issue was only limited until 1965 and OD 107 fatigues were often worn. Plastic canteens replaced the M1910 metal type in 1962, though metal ones were in use into the early 1970s. Full colour insignia was still in use and subdued undershirts had not yet been issued. M1956 web gear was normal issue.

J2: Specialist 4, 173d Abn. Bde., Vietnam, 1968

This M60 machine gunner wears the standard jungle fatigues, of which several minor variants were issued, and M1956 web gear. Jungle, or tropical combat, boots were now issued along



with such critical items as 2-qt. canteens and olive green undershirts. Full-colour insignia were still in use as subdued versions were not approved until late 1968.

J3: PFC, 3d Bde., 82d Abn. Div., Vietnam, 1970

The M16A1 rifle had completely replaced the M14 by 1968. Subdued insignia were fully in use. Webbing was basically the M1956 equipment, but short ammunition cases for the M16's 20-round magazines were adopted in 1967 along with a nylon equipment belt and canteen cover. The nylon tropical rucksack, a desperately needed item, was first issued in late 1968. Improved jungle boots, with 'Panama' soles were first issued in 1966, though the earlier Vibram-pattern sole was issued for some time.

K1: Sergeant, 82d Abn. Div., Ft Bragg, 1978

In the mid-1970s the 82d was issued camouflage jungle uniforms, itself adopted in 1967, for field wear. With the exception of pin-on collar rank insignia, no other insignia were permitted to be pinned or sewn on in an effort to prolong their wear. Perma-press OG 507 fatigues were approved in 1974 and retained by the 82d for garrison wear. The nylon All-purpose Lightweight Individual Carrying Equipment (ALICE) was adopted in 1974.

K2: PFC, 82d Abn. Div., Grenada, 1983

While the Battle Dress Uniform (BDU) had just begun to be issued, few paratroopers involved in Operation URGENT FURY possessed them, wearing jungle fatigues instead. The island's heat and humidity forced many to remove their outer shirts

Inside a C-141 the white-helmeted jumpmasters prepare to put a stick of students out the door. The jumpmasters wear different versions of the Air Force 5OC7024 parachute, generically, and incorrectly, referred to as the B-12 by the Army. (SP4 Ann McDonald, US Army)

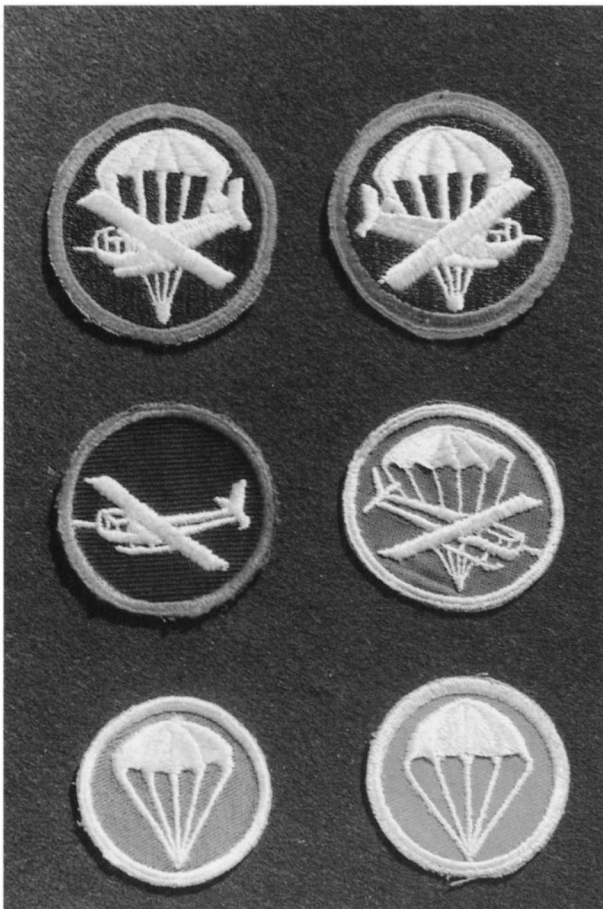
and wear their Personnel Armor System for Ground Troops (PASGT) body armour vest over their undershirts. Commonly known as the 'Fritz', the Kevlar® PASGT helmet had just been issued to the 82d. Unit insignia, name and US Army tapes, and skill badges had also been approved for wear on the jungle fatigues. The ALICE medium combat pack was issued to airborne troops with a frame, which conventional infantry units normally did not receive. The M203 grenade launcher began to replace the M79 at the end of the Vietnam War.

K3: Specialist 4, 82d Abn. Div., Panama, 1989

Most personnel involved in Operation JUST CAUSE wore the lightweight version of the BDU, introduced in 1986 (made of the same fabric as the jungle fatigues). Improved combat boots, first issued in 1985, were also in widespread use. Unlike Grenada, the committed forces wore US flags since many of the Panamanian Defense Forces wore camouflage uniforms. A white tape was worn by some units as a further identification means. The M249E1 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW) was not issued until just after Grenada, Panama providing the first opportunity for combat testing.

L1: Instructor, Airborne Dept., Ft Benning, 1973

Instructors had worn black baseball caps since the early 1960s as a means of identification on the training fields, leading to



Airborne cap insignia (L to R, top to bottom): Enlisted airborne, Officer's airborne, Enlisted glider (the first three have a white insignia on medium blue with red border), Variant officer's airborne (white on light blue), parachute infantry (white on light blue), parachute field artillery (white on red). (Ken Askins collection)

their nickname, 'Black Caps'. In the mid-1970s the World War II vintage Airborne Command patch was approved for wear as a chest patch on a black windbreaker. Normal duty uniform was a grey sweatshirt with fatigue trousers. Unit jumpmasters often wear black caps for identification while conducting their duties.

L2: Rigger, 36th Abn. Bde, Austin, Tex., 1978

Parachute Riggers semi-officially adopted their red baseball cap in the early 1960s to ensure their identity when performing rigging duties in marshalling areas. The embroidered Rigger wings were worn unofficially on the cap's front and over the right chest pocket until it was officially approved in the early 1980s. Subdued wings are now worn on BDUs.

L3: Pathfinder, Co. C, 509th Inf., Ft Rucker, Ala., 1982

Pathfinders too have worn black baseball caps since the early 1960s. A large embroidered Pathfinder badge was worn on the lower left sleeve of the Army green uniform and on the left chest pocket of fatigues until replaced by a smaller metal badge in 1968. Initially it could only be worn in lieu of the jumpwings, but it was soon authorized for both to be worn.

L4: Paratrooper, 3d Bn., 325th Inf., Vicenza, Italy, 1990

Influenced by the British, the maroon beret was unofficially worn by some paratroopers in World War II. It appeared again in 1961 worn by the V and VII Corps LRRP Companies until banned in 1964. In 1973 the Airborne Dept. authorized its wear on a local basis. The 82d followed in 1974 and the 36th Abn. Bde. the next year. In 1973, Gen. Creighton Abrams, Army chief of staff, approved the wear of non-standard headwear in an effort to promote *esprit de corps* in the post-Vietnam Army. It was not long before the situation got entirely out of hand and the wear of unofficial berets was restricted to the airborne and a few other units. In Nov. 1978, the new chief of staff, Gen. Bernard Rogers, banned all unofficial berets (Special Forces and Rangers retained their previously official berets). The airborne never reconciled the loss of the beret and actively lobbied for its restoration. This effort was finally successful when the new chief of staff, Gen. Edward Meyer, authorized the airborne their beret on 28 Nov. 1980 as one of his first official acts. The maroon beret was made official in the uniform regulations one year later.

L5: Military Policemen, 118th MP Co., Ft Bragg, 1988

The double blue and red helmet stripes signify an MP unit assigned to a corps (XVIII Abn. Corps in this case). This MP wears the BDU field jacket adopted in 1984. The naugahyde MP brassard is one of several designs and materials currently in use today. MP units sent to Panama prior to and during Operation JUST CAUSE wore a US flag in place of unit patches.

L6: Paratrooper, 82d Abn. Div., Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, 1989

All forces attached to the UN's Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) wear a burnt orange beret with the MFO insignia. The MFO patch is worn on the left shoulder. The desert version of the BDU was adopted in 1982.

Airborne qualification badges, all silver (L to R, top to bottom): Basic parachutist, glider, senior parachutist, air assault (1963-64), master parachutist, air assault (current). (Ken Askins collection)





Pathfinder badges: Embroidered (gold yellow torch and wing with black and blue highlights, light blue and red flames, black backing), Metal (gold torch and wing, light blue and red

flames). **Rigger badges:** Embroidered (white wings and parachute with black and blue highlights, red RIGGER, black backing), Metal (silver). (Ken Askins collection)

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GORDON L. ROTTMAN entered the US Army in 1967, volunteering for Special Forces, and completed training as a weapons specialist in 1968. He was assigned to the 7th Special Forces Group until being reassigned to the 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam in 1969-70. He entered the Tex
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