



D-52 - HELLCATS

# D-52 HELLCATS HISTORY





# Anti-Tank History



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## Buick M-18 Hellcats Score In 21 Days of Steady Action

Mounting evidence that the Buick Hellcat M-18 Tank Destroyer is the "hottest thing in armored warfare" was recently described in Army news Valley, Okla., commands Company B of the 60th Tank Destroyer Battalion. In his outfit there are 12 M-18 "Hellcats." His company was recently continuous action during days dur

**L**ONG AGO we decided something about the American fighting man.

Give him good weapons to fight with—and he'll do the rest.

That thought guided us in building the big Pratt & Whitney aircraft engines that keep the B-24 Liberator boring relentlessly through the skies.

It guided us, too, when we sat down to design the M-18 as an answer to the German Tiger Tank.

Shortly after the breakthrough out of Normandy, stories began to trickle back about what the Tank Destroyer Battalions were doing with this lightning-paced slugger.

Typical of these exploits is the tale of a single battalion—12 Hellcats—that spent 21 days in continuous action. Score: four Tigers, two Mark

IV's, four armored vehicles knocked out—and hundreds of enemy troops killed, wounded or captured!

It seems that the men like to keep busy—especially with the Hellcat. For in all this action only two M-18's were damaged—neither beyond repair—and the crews suffered only minor injuries.

That's what Buick men and Ordnance officers were after when they joined hands to perfect the M-18.

They gave it hitting power—in a high-velocity 76-mm. cannon. They gave it traction to go anywhere and speed to outrace any other land vehicle.

It now appears they also gave it ability to take care of itself.

And given tools like that, you can count on the boys who use them to do the job!

Every Sunday Afternoon  
GENERAL MOTORS SYMPHONY OF THE AIR—NBC Network





# Creation of Anti-Tank Warfare

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- Anti-tank warfare arose as a result of the need to develop technology and tactics to destroy tanks during the First World War.
- Germans manufactured only about twenty combat-worthy tanks during World War I and utilized another dozen captured French and British models, the Allies felt no need to develop a specialized anti-tank capability.

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# Creation of Anti-Tank Warfare

- Events in Europe during the interwar years did little to alert the U.S. Army to the growing threat posed by the tank.
- During the interwar period, great strides were also made in the evolution of tank doctrine.
- In Germany, the rearmament program instigated in 1935, by Adolf Hitler created the first panzer (tank) divisions, which would in time constitute the major challenge to American antitank capabilities.
- American progress in the field of antitank warfare during the interwar years lagged badly.



# Creation Of Anti-Tank

- By 1939, the US Army's anti-tank doctrine included some sound fundamental principles, even though the Army had yet to establish any anti-tank units themselves. Nor did the Army possess a real antitank gun.
- Germany's invasion of Poland in Sept. 1939 was the beginning of World War II and showed the world to the potential of mechanized forces. Six German panzer divisions spearheaded the advance that enveloped and crushed the Polish Army in its positions and brought the campaign to a close within a month.



# Creation Of Anti-Tank

- The German Panzer forces also, easily destroyed the French Army, which was widely regarded as the finest in western Europe if not the world.
- In 1942, the American tank destroyer program and units were activated. Some of the events that occurred to activate these units were the production official tank destroyer organization of unit, the creation of a tank destroyer doctrine, the development of specialized tank destroyer vehicles, and the establishment of training facilities and programs for tank destroyer personnel. So, by the end of that year, tank destroyer forces were trained and fighting in combat.

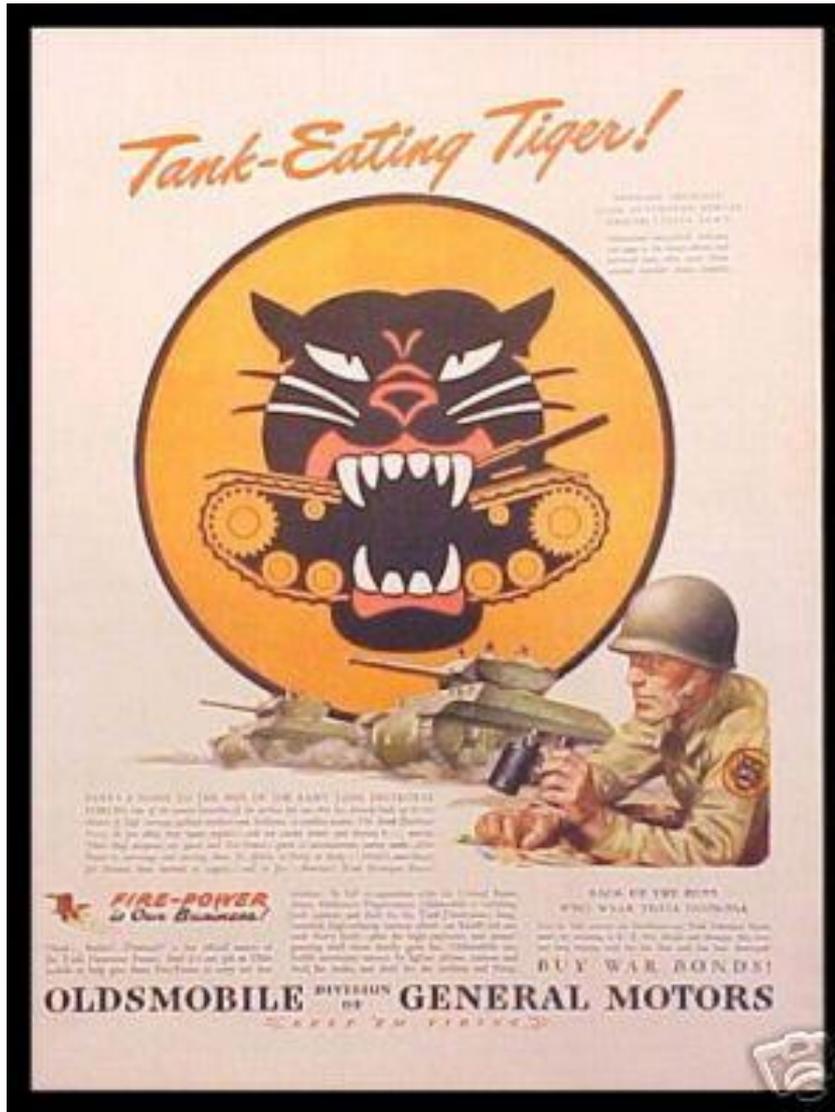


# Hellcats in Training

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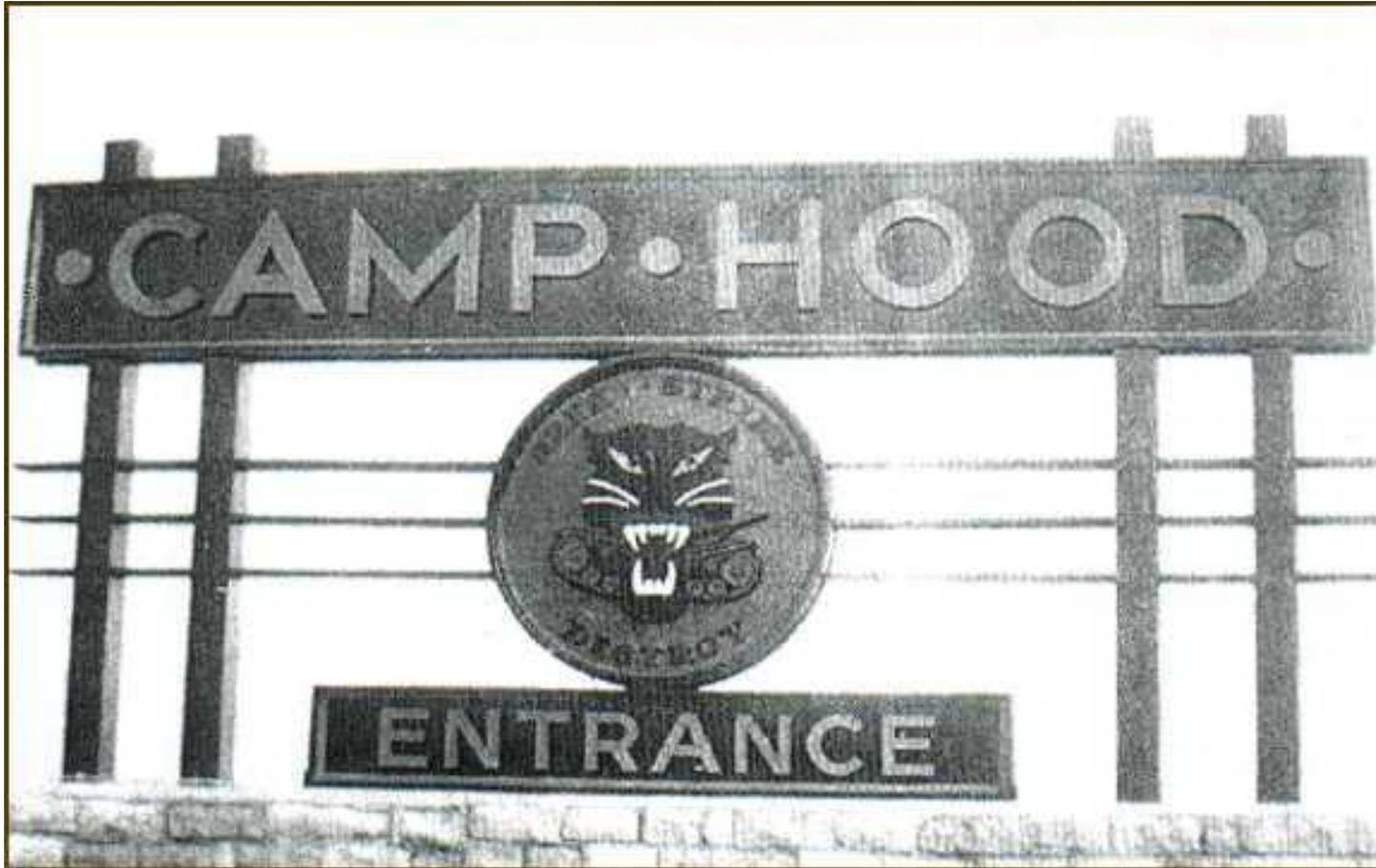
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# Hellcats Training

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Entrance to  
Camp Hood the  
main training  
Area for the tank  
Destroyer  
Battalions.

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# Hellcats in Europe



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Soldiers in the 771<sup>st</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion during the summer of 1945.

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# Tank Destroyer Vehicles/ Systems

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# Towed Guns

- The 37 mm Gun M3 was the first dedicated anti-tank gun fielded by United States forces in numbers. Introduced in 1940, it became the standard anti-tank gun of the U.S. infantry with its size enabling it to be pulled by a jeep. However, the continuing improvement of German tanks quickly rendered the 37 mm ineffective. Like many other light anti-tank guns, the M3 was widely used in the infantry support role and as an anti-personnel weapon, firing high-explosive and canister rounds.
- The M5 and M6 tank mounted variants were used in several models of armored vehicles most notably in the Stuart Light Tank M3/M5, the Lee Medium Tank M3, and Greyhound Light Armored Car M8. In addition, the M3 in its original version was mated to a number of other self-propelled carriages.



# Problems with Towed Guns

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- There were problems with towed guns they were unable to reposition themselves or withdraw, and were often overrun by the enemy advance, or simply outflanked by infantry. The gun crews, unlike tanks, had no protection against small-arms fire, and could easily be driven back by a squad of infantry. This lack of mobility was aggravated by the cold wet weather, and rough conditions, which tended to bog down wheeled vehicles and immobilize fixed guns. Throughout the 1st Army as a whole, three-quarters of the tank destroyers that were lost were towed rather than self-propelled. One battalion, the 801st, lost 17 towed guns in just two days.



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# Soldiers towing an AT gun

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# M 10

- The M10 tank destroyer, formally 3-inch Gun Motor Carriage, M10 was a United States tank destroyer of World War II based on the chassis of the M4 Sherman tank. It was numerically the most important U.S. tank destroyer of World War II and combined a reasonably potent anti-tank weapon with a turreted platform. Despite the introduction of more-powerful types as replacements, it remained in service until the end of the war.
- It was christened the Wolverine by the British, although unlike other vehicle names such as the M4 Sherman, the name was not adopted by American soldiers called it *TD* a nickname for any tank destroyer in general beyond its formal designation.



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# M10 Tank Destroyer

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# M36

- The M36 tank destroyer, formally 90 mm Gun Motor Carriage, M36, was an American tank destroyer used during World War II. American soldiers usually referred to them as *TDs* for 'tank destroyers. The M36 first served in combat in Europe from September of 1944, it also served until the end of WWII; it also served during the Korean War, and in the armies of several other countries.



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# M36 Tank Destroyer



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# M36 Tank Destroyer



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A line of M36 tank destroyers.



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# M36 Tank Destroyer



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Soldiers in all white Cammo, with a M-36 Tank Destroyer From the 893<sup>rd</sup> TD Battalion.

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# M18 “Hellcat”

- The M18 Hellcat was an American tank destroyer of World War II. Armed with a 76 mm cannon, the vehicle was the fastest tracked armored fighting vehicle during World War II with a top speed up to 60 mph and Buick nicknamed it the Hellcat. The speed was attained by keeping armor to a minimum, no more than 1" thick. Hellcat crews took advantage of the vehicle's speed to minimize the enemy's ability to pierce its thin armor.



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# M18 Hellcat



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# Battle of the Bastogne



- The 705<sup>th</sup> tank destroyer battalion, which was equipped with M18s, fought alongside the 101st Airborne at the siege of Bastogne, and played a key role in the defense of the town. Four M-18s and a platoon of infantry occupied Noville, just north of Bastogne, and stopped a German armored attack with flank fires, killing 30 heavy tanks (Panthers and Tigers). The battle was also the first major engagement of the M36, with its 90 mm gun; the three battalions employed proved highly effective.



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# M18 Hellcat



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# Segregated Units

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-LTC Frank Pritchard, conferring with tank destroyer unit commanders. This particular unit was a segregated unit during WWII.

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# Segregated Units



-Another Segregated unit practicing on their 3" gun during practice fires in England before deploying to mainland Europe.



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# Unit Patches





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# Major Thomas's Actions

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Major Charles Leroy Thomas (April 17, 1920-February 15, 1980) was a United States Army officer who was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions while a company commander during the capture of Climbach, France in 1944 — the second African American to be awarded one during World War II. This award was upgraded to the Medal of Honor awarded posthumously in 1997.



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# Unit Patches



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# Use of Tank destroyers

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- While the tank destroyers were broadly used in their intended role in Europe. They were used as a reserve to counter a massed armored attack. The battalions were rarely committed as a whole to attack tank formations. They were used more effectively as local anti-tank assets. They would be assigned with a platoon or a company within an infantry battalion to bolster its defensive strength.



# Conclusion

- The Tank Destroyer battalions, and M18 Hellcats were only utilized during World War II.
- During WWII tanks like the M36 made the tank destroyers obsolete, due to the fact that tank technology and tactics changed so much during WWII.
- Due to these things the TD Battalions were obsolete and were deactivated.



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# 52<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment History





# 52<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment History

- The 52<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment has participated in many war: WWI, WWII, Vietnam, and Desert Storm II.



# 52<sup>nd</sup> WWI

- The 52<sup>nd</sup> Infantry regiment was first activated 16 June 1917, at Chickamauga, Georgia. The unit first saw combat in Meuse-Argonne, in Northern France, and in Alsace, France, during World War I.



# 52<sup>nd</sup> History WWI



- The 52nd Infantry Regiment's was assigned to the Sixth Infantry Division in 1917.
- The Sixth Division was organized in November 1917 as a square division consisting of the 51st, 52nd, 53rd, and the 54th Infantry Regiments, the 16th, 17th and 18th Machine-Gun Battalions and the 3rd, 11th and 78th Field Artillery Regiments.
- The units of the division gathered in New York and left for France in July 1918.
- The Sixth's mission was the defense of a 21-mile front. The division engaged in active patrols in no man's land and behind the German lines.



# 52<sup>nd</sup> History WWII

- After a period of inactivation, C Company, 52d Infantry Regiment was redesigned and activated as C Company, 52d Armored Infantry on 15 July 1942.
- It was assigned to the 9th Armored Division at Fort Riley, Kansas. They would deploy with the 9th Armored Division to France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and Germany after a two-month train up in England. The company served in Europe with the 9th Division from 31 July 1944 to 6 May 1945.



# Operation Fortitude

- The 9th Division was one of several real US Army divisions that participated in Operation Fortitude, the deception operation mounted by the US-British to deceive the Germans about the real landing site for Operation Neptune, the amphibious invasion of Northern France. The 9th was assigned to a camp on the British coastline opposite of the German defenses in Pas-de-Calais.
- The ruse was so successful that the German high command was completely fooled, and concentrated their reserves away from the Normandy coast. In honor of their participation in this deception, the 9th was officially nicknamed the "Phantom Division."



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# Operation Fortitude



-Dummy Tank utilized in Operation Fortitude



# 52<sup>nd</sup> Bastogne

- The 9<sup>th</sup> Divisions stand at Bastogne held off the Germans long enough to enable the 101st Airborne to dig in for a defense of the city. After a rest period in January 1945, the division made preparations for a drive across the Rur river. The offensive was launched, 28 February, and the 9th smashed across the Rur to Rheinbach, sending patrols into Remagen. The Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen was found intact, and was seized by elements of the 9th Armored minutes before demolition charges were set to explode on 7 March 1945. The division exploited the bridgehead, moving south and east across the river Lahn toward Limburg an der Lahn, where thousands of Allied prisoners were liberated. The 52d Armored Infantry Battalion held back an advancing Nazi armor and infantry force while the 101st Airborne set up defenses in Bastogne, resulting in successful retention of the city. Soldiers of C Company, 52d Armored Infantry Battalion rescued four American tanks caught in a Nazi complex attack. The unit was awarded the Belgium Croix De Guerre for their actions during this specific battle.



# Vietnam

- C Company, 52d Infantry served in Vietnam from 1 December 1966 to 15 August 1972. In 1971, the company had an authorized strength of 137 infantrymen.
- The company was a rifle security company assigned to bolster the infantry capabilities of the 716th MP Battalion, responsible for providing security to the US facilities in the Saigon area.
- They were on alert and expected isolated terrorists attacks. However, they would soon face the Tet offensive, an all out communist attack throughout the whole of Vietnam
- would find themselves defending the US Embassy, Saigon against not only superior numbers but superior armament as well.



# Vietnam

- In the early morning hours of 31 January 1968, these forces attacked facilities throughout Saigon almost simultaneously.
- The security policemen on the perimeter could hear muffled gunfire as the VC shot up some of the bachelor officers' quarters and bachelor enlisted quarters, five troops were killed. An MP jeep patrol was pinned down upon responding to the attack. The reaction team that arrived to reinforce the situation was headed by Staff Sergeant Jimmy Bedgood of C Company, 52d Infantry, a security-guard company made up of combat infantry veterans that was attached to the 716th Military Police Battalion. The reaction team provided the cover fire that allowed the jeep patrol to get out of harm's way. In the process, an RPG slammed into the reaction team's jeep, wounding several soldiers and killing a 21 year old soldier.



# Vietnam

- After the attack military police and marine reaction forces responded to the embassy attack soldiers exchanged fire with the guerillas on the grounds. The Viet Cong could not enter the embassy building and could not exit the compound. Additionally, an infantry reaction force that attempted to land by helicopter on the roof of the embassy was unable to land due to heavy enemy small arms fire. At dawn, the order was given to retake the compound. Military police rammed the embassy's main gate and stormed the compound. When the embassy was re-secured, 19 dead Viet Cong were found and one was captured.



# Modern Day

- In May 2000, the Army stood up its first Stryker Brigade Combat Team. As the Army stood up a total of six Stryker brigades by 2008, each anti-tank company was flagged as a separate company of the 52d Infantry Regiment.



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# Modern Day

- On 14JUL02 D-52 was activated and assigned to Ft. Lewis, WA.
- On 16DEC06 D-52 was moved to 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade combat team 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at Ft. Wainwright, AK.



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# D-52 at a Security Halt in Iraq



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# AT Companies

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- Anti-Tank companies were added to light/Stryker units due to the lessons learned during WWII.
- Light and Stryker Brigades needed anti-armor capabilities so instead of attaching Anti-tank battalions to units, they added them to existing Light and Stryker units to make them more self-sufficient.



# D-52 at a TOW live fire

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# Unit Awards



## Belgium Croix De Guerre

- The unit was awarded the Belgium Croix de guerre for their action in Bastogne.
- The Croix de guerre may either be awarded as an individual or unit award to those soldiers who distinguish themselves by acts of heroism involving combat with the enemy.





# Unit Awards



## Presidential Unit Citation



- The unit was awarded the Presidential Unit citation for their actions at Luxembourg, St. Vith, Bastonge, Remagen Bridgehead, Saigon (Tet Offensive).
- The Presidential Unit Citation, is awarded to units of the United States Armed Forces, and those of allied countries, for extraordinary heroism in combat against an armed enemy on or after 7 December 1941, the date of the Attack on Pearl Harbor and the start of American involvement in World War II. The unit must display such gallantry, determination, and *esprit de corps* in accomplishing its mission under extremely difficult and hazardous conditions so as to set it apart from and above other units participating in the same campaign.



# Unit Awards

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## Meritorious Unit Commendation



- The unit was awarded the Meritorious unit commendation in Vietnam in 1967, 1968, 1968-1969 and Iraq 2008-2009.
- The Meritorious Unit Commendation is a mid-level unit award of the United States military which is awarded to any military command which displays exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service, heroic deeds, or valorous actions.



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# Unit Awards



## Superior Unit Award



- The Superior Unit Award is a decoration of the United States Army which is awarded in peacetime to any unit of the Army which displays outstanding meritorious performance of a difficult and challenging mission carried out under extraordinary circumstances.



# Conclusion



- The 52<sup>nd</sup> Infantry regiment has served in, almost every major conflict since WWI.
- They have played integral roles in all conflicts that they have participated in, and have served with distinction.
- In the modern day, 52<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment units supply Anti-Tank capabilities to all Stryker units across the Army.

# Questions?



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