



NCOs a Vital Part of 4th Infantry Division's Storied Past

By Pablo Villa

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The 4th Infantry Division experienced an arduous beginning that belies its 96-year history.

Unlike many other Army units, the division had an abbreviated amount of time to get off the ground. A mere 17 days of outdoor training is all the 4th ID completed before being thrust into its first action in World War I.

And yet, the 4th Infantry Division, headquartered at Fort Carson, Colo., has become one of the Army's most storied units, putting the first American ground forces boots on the ground in Normandy during World War II, capturing Saddam Hussein during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 and, just last year, having two of its members awarded the Medal of Honor for actions in Afghanistan.

Fittingly, the two Soldiers who received the military's highest honor — Staff Sgt. Ty M. Carter and Staff Sgt. Clinton L. Romesha — were noncommissioned officers. For it is NCOs who have helped guide the 4th Infantry Division from a fledgling group thrust into World War I to a competent team of thousands that embodies the motto, "Steadfast and Loyal."

"NCOs do more than any other rank," said Scott Daubert, director of the 4th Infantry Division Museum at Fort Carson. "That is true in the 4th Infantry Division as well."

Forged in sludge

The 4th Infantry Division was formed Dec. 3, 1917, at Camp Greene, N.C.

What Maj. Gen. George H. Cameron, the first commander, discovered when he arrived at the camp six miles south of Charlotte, N.C., was a group of eager Soldiers and the NCOs leading them who were ready to work, as well as Soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division, who were conducting their own preparations at Camp Greene to enter World War I.

But Cameron also found a problem.

"This area of North Carolina was known to have really bad subsoil," said Thomas Silvis, a historian at the 4th Infantry Division Museum. "The moisture would collect and stagnate. If you rode wagons or vehicles over the top, it would cut ruts into it and it would turn into a muddy quagmire — if you dropped something, it would immediately just suck right in. If



Maj. Gen. George H. Cameron, the first commander of the 4th Infantry Division. (Photo courtesy of 4th Infantry Division Museum)

you were to try to walk across it, you'd sink into it up to your ankles, if not up to your knees."

This soggy mess, coupled with one of the harshest winters the region had seen, made simultaneous training for two units a complicated endeavor as Camp Greene welcomed the start of 1918.

The 3rd Infantry Division, which was scheduled to aid the French and British troops defending France first, was given priority in training and in the amount of draftees joining its ranks. As such, out of the five months it was at Camp Greene, the 4th Infantry Division enjoyed only 17 days of training in the slop.

"When they did get outside, they tried to dig trenches. But the soil could not hold walls, so they couldn't train outside," Silvis said. "They were lucky if each infantryman was able to pull off five rounds of his Springfield rifle before they shipped them off."

The orders to do just that arrived April 15, 1918.

World War I: A brief outing

The 4th Infantry Division engineers were the first to ship to Europe on April 29, and by June 5, the entire division was in France. The 7th and 8th Brigades began intensive

training in Samer while the Artillery Brigade trained at Camp de Souge in Bordeaux.

In mid-June, elements of the 4th Infantry Division were attached to the French Army and proved their merit by helping secure the village of Chouy as well as take Hill 172 near the village of Chevillon, where the Germans were heavily entrenched.

In July, the 4th Infantry Division was placed under U.S. I Corps control and fought the Germans at the Vesle River and near Verdun as part of the St. Mihiel Offensive. The 4th would end the war fighting alongside the British and French as part of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive that began in September.

Throughout its combat operations, the 4th Infantry Division did find one fortuitous aspect about its limited training in North Carolina.

"In the area of France and the weather conditions that they ran into those first few months, it was very lucky they had that soggy situation in North Carolina," Silvis said. "That's exactly what they ran into on the battlefields of France. Heavy artillery engagements were chewing up the ground, which was mainly clay mixed with snow or rain all the time. So the limited training that they did get turned out to be a real boon and a benefit because they ended up going through almost the same thing."

The Armistice ended the war Nov. 11, 1918, 359 days after the 4th Infantry Division was formed. In its brief action, the unit proved its mettle as the only American combat force to serve with both the French and British troops in their respective sectors, as well as with all corps in the American combat sector.

The division conducted occupation duty in Europe until July 31, 1919, when the last detachment sailed for the United States from France. The 4th Infantry Division was inactivated Sept. 21, 1921, at Camp Lewis, Wash.



The 1st Battalion, 39th Infantry Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division marches through Kaiseresch, Germany, on Dec. 14, 1918. (Photo courtesy of 4th Infantry Division Museum)

World War II: The D-Day spearhead

On June 1, 1940, the 4th ID was reactivated at Fort Benning, Ga., as part of the Army buildup in preparation for World War II.

The division was built using a new structure featuring three infantry regiments, each with about 3,000 personnel, all of which trained at Fort Benning until 1943. During its time at Fort Benning, the 4th ID served as an experimental division for the Army, practicing various maneuvers in exercises throughout the country and taking part in amphibious training, not knowing what it was for.

On June 6, 1944, the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe began with landings at five beachheads along the Normandy coast of France. The westernmost flank of the coast was designated Utah Beach, and the 4th Infantry Division was to be the first American division to land in that area. On D-Day, the division accomplished this feat, which earned Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt Jr. the Medal of Honor, the first of four such medals that went to the division during World War II.

After the landings, the 4th's objective was to take the city of Cherbourg to the north, which it did by June 25. Then it headed south to join the battle of the Falaise Gap, where Allied soldiers encircled some 200,000 Germans and started squeezing the gap. An estimated 20,000 to 50,000 of the enemy escaped and would later see Allied forces again at the Battle of the Bulge.

Elements of the division, part of the first group of Allies to reach the city, then moved toward Paris on Aug. 24 with Free French Forces to liberate the Parisian capital.

The milestone moment was a short-lived highlight, as the 4th ID would soon become involved in the Battle of the Bulge and the three-month Battle of Hürtgen Forest — two clashes that were among the most costly of the war.

The bravery of the division was typified by Staff Sgt. Marcario Garcia on Nov. 27, 1944, near Grosshau, Germany.

When the platoon Garcia was leading was pinned down by German machine-gun fire, Garcia single-handedly attacked the nests, eliminating two enemy emplacements and capturing four prisoners, despite being wounded. For his actions, Garcia became the 4th ID's first NCO to be awarded the Medal of Honor and also the first Mexican immigrant to receive the award.

The 4th Infantry Division ended World War II by crossing the Danube River and making its way to Munich before hostilities in Germany ended May 25, 1945. The division returned to the United States on July 10 and was prepared to deploy to the Pacific before the Japanese surrendered.



Soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division move off the Utah beachhead on D-Day, June 6, 1944.

With the war over, the division was once again inactivated May 12, 1946, at Camp Butner, N.C.

Reactivation and the Vietnam War

NCOs figured heavily into the 4th Infantry Division's next assignment.

The division was reactivated as a training division July 15, 1947, at Fort Ord, Calif., where NCOs helped make the post a staging area for units preparing for deployment to Korea. In October 1950, the 4th ID was reorganized as a combat division at Fort Benning before being deployed to Germany in May 1951 to become part of the NATO structure.

In September 1958, the division returned to the United States and was assigned to Fort Lewis, where NCOs once again figured largely into its day-to-day operations, providing basic training to thousands of young draftees. In 1958, the division became part of the Strategic Army Corps and from then to 1965 participated in a plethora of major exercises that ranged from amphibious landings to alpine training. The eventual focus of the training centered on testing the unit's capabilities in a tropical climate.

"It was a time of preparation," Silvis said. "NCOs were a large part of this. The training was going to be put to use shortly."

That opportunity came in January 1966 when the division began preparations for the Vietnam War.

The 4th Engineer Battalion set up its base of operations near Pleiku, a town in Vietnam's central highlands that summer. The 1st Brigade arrived in October and moved into a new camp south of Pleiku. The 2nd Brigade established its headquarters near the coast at Tuy Hoa in September 1966.



Members of the 4th Infantry Division move out on dismounted patrol east of Pleiku, Vietnam. (Photo courtesy of 4th Infantry Division Museum)

“The reason they were sent over to the coastal region was that the harvest was coming,” Silvis said. “Historically, the [North Vietnamese Army] would come in here, rip that harvest off and ship it up north. So we sent a brigade to help them protect that harvest.”

The Division’s 3rd Brigade was sent further south outside of Saigon and was assigned to the control of the 25th Infantry Division. With the 25th ID’s 3rd Brigade already operating out of the Pleiku area, the decision was made to reflag both organizations in August 1967.

During its time in Vietnam, the 4th Infantry Division primarily engaged NVA units operating in the central highlands as well as eliminating the enemy’s supply and equipment lines.

NCOs helped guide their units during these missions as the tropical terrain created logistical challenges and the combat action consisted of small, company-sized firefights against an elusive enemy that was able to retreat effectively into the rainforest or across the Cambodian border.

For much of November 1967, the 4th Infantry Division was engaged in numerous clashes in the area near the village of Dak To, a key geographical area that was a major branch of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The 4th’s efforts destroyed two NVA regiments’ operational capabilities and neutralized a major NVA offensive.

The Tet Offensive of Jan. 30, 1968, was also speedily put down in the area around Pleiku by the 4th ID. The division closed its time in Vietnam by helping the Army of the Republic of Vietnam move into positions to secure the civilian population centers of the central highlands before leaving beginning in November 1970.

Its time in Vietnam produced 12 Medals of Honor for the 4th Infantry Division; six of those honors went to NCOs. In addition, among the units currently serving with the division, 16 Presidential Unit Citations, 23 Valorous Unit

Awards and 20 Meritorious Unit Citations were awarded for actions in Vietnam.

Fort Carson and Fort Hood

Upon returning to the United States, the 4th Infantry Division was assigned to Fort Carson, Colo. It would spend 25 years at the post located at the base of the Rocky Mountains. During its time there, the division’s NCOs honed their leadership skills as they took part in a slew of training exercises and dealt with numerous subordinate unit redesignations, activations and inactivations.

In 1995, after word was handed down regarding the downsizing of the Army, a unique opportunity arose for the 4th Infantry Division in Fort Hood, Texas, where its new headquarters was to be.

“The Army was starting to upgrade from this old technology to computers and the digital world,” Silvis said. “So the Army set up a training schoolhouse down in Fort Hood called Force XXI. It was the upgrade of the Army from old communications and electronics capabilities to the new.”

The 4th Infantry Division was the first unit to go through Force XXI, which along with communication enhancements, included training in new high-tech weaponry supplements such as satellites, unmanned aerial vehicles, night-vision goggles, long-range reconnaissance systems and more. From 1995 to 2001, the division’s efforts were key to developing compatibility and effectiveness for the new technology as the Army entered the 21st century.

While the 4th Infantry Division was at Fort Hood, it also prepared for the Iraq War.

Global War on Terrorism

The 4th Infantry Division deployed to support Operation Iraqi Freedom in April 2003.

The division roared quickly through Baghdad, Samarra and Tikrit before accomplishing the most notable feat of the war in Iraq.



4th Infantry Division Soldiers test some of the Army’s new equipment as part of the Force XXI mission at Fort Hood, Texas. (Photo courtesy of 4th Infantry Division Museum)

On Dec. 13, 2003, the division’s 1st Brigade Combat Team, commanded by then-Maj. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno and joined by Joint Operations Task Force 121, captured Saddam Hussein during a nighttime operation about 10 miles south of Tikrit. His capture was a milestone moment during the war and a symbol of optimism for the Iraqi people.

The division would deploy to Iraq twice more, mainly to take part in security operations.

In May 2009, elements of the 4th ID deployed to Afghanistan, including the 4th Brigade Combat Team, which took part in the Battle of Kamdesh in the mountains in the eastern part of the country.

On Oct. 3, 2009, about 300 insurgents attacked an American outpost defended by 85 International Security Assistance Force soldiers, including those assigned to B Troop, 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry. A 12-hour firefight ensued, resulting in eight American deaths. But the efforts of two NCOs to save lives and secure the outpost after it was breached were deemed worthy of the nation’s top military honor.

Staff Sgt. Clinton L. Romesha was awarded the Medal of Honor during a White House ceremony in February 2013. Staff Sgt. Ty M. Carter, a specialist at the time of the battle, was awarded the medal in August.

The pair’s accolades mark the most recent honors awarded to members of the 4th Infantry Division. They also continue the proud tradition of the division, a tradi-



President Barack Obama places the Medal of Honor around the neck of Staff Sgt. Clinton L. Romesha during a ceremony Feb. 11, 2013, at the White House. (Photo courtesy of Army News Service)

tion that Daubert hopes to preserve and celebrate at the 4th Infantry Division Museum at Fort Carson.

Since the division returned to Fort Carson in July 2009 after 14 years at Fort Hood, Daubert has worked tirelessly to improve the facility and turn it into something Soldiers can look to as a symbol of pride.

“Soldiers, and NCOs, aren’t understanding their heritage and history,” Daubert said. “It’s when they’re at the division level when we’re asking them to go out and do horrible, horrible things. They need to be inspired to go do that. They need to feel like they’re a part of something and understand that they’re in a long line of dogfaced Soldiers doing the same things that every dogfaced Soldier has done. If they don’t have places like this, where do they get that from?”

And as the 4th Infantry Division continues its preparations at Fort Carson for whatever the future holds, Daubert pledges to work just as tediously to ensure its storied past is preserved.

“Every Soldier and NCO that comes in here says, ‘Wow, I did not know?’ about the 4th having the first boots on the ground on D-Day, about us capturing Saddam,” Daubert said. “We want them to know, and to have some pride.”



President Barack Obama places the Medal of Honor around the neck of Staff Sgt. Ty Michael Carter during a ceremony Aug. 26, 2013, at the White House. (Photo by Staff. Sgt. Bernardo Fuller)

4th Infantry Division current structure

Division Special Troops Battalion (Lightning)

1st Armored Brigade Combat Team (Raiders)

- [Special Troops Battalion](#) (Phoenix)
- 7th Squadron, [10th Cavalry Regiment](#) (Ghost)
- 1st Battalion, [22d Infantry Regiment](#) (Regulars)
- 1st Battalion, [66th Armor Regiment](#) (Iron Knights)
- 4th Battalion, [42nd Field Artillery Regiment](#) (Straight Arrows)
- 4th [Brigade Support Battalion](#) (Packhorse)

2nd [Armored](#) Brigade Combat Team (Warhorse)

- [Special Troops Battalion](#) (Lonestars)
- 1st Squadron, [10th Cavalry Regiment](#) (Buffalo Soldiers)
- 2nd Battalion, [8th Infantry Regiment](#) (First at Normandy)
- 1st Battalion, [67th Armor Regiment](#) (Death Dealers)
- [3rd Battalion](#), [16th Field Artillery Regiment](#) (Rolling Thunder)
- [204th Brigade Support Battalion](#) (Rough Riders)

3rd [Armored](#) Brigade Combat Team (Iron)

- [Special Troops Battalion](#) (Phoenix)
- 4th Squadron, [10th Cavalry Regiment](#) (BlackJack)
- 1st Battalion, [8th Infantry Regiment](#) (Fighting Eagles)
- 1st Battalion, [68th Armor Regiment](#) (Silver Lions)
- [3rd Battalion](#), [29th Field Artillery Regiment](#) (Pace-setters)
- [64th Brigade Support Battalion](#) (Mountaineers)

4th [Infantry](#) Brigade Combat Team (Mountain Warriors)

- [Special Troops Battalion](#) (Gryphons)
- 1st Battalion, [12th Infantry Regiment](#) (Red Warriors)
- 2nd Battalion, [12th Infantry Regiment](#) (Lethal Warriors)
- 3rd Squadron, [61st Cavalry Regiment](#) (Destroyers)
- 2nd Battalion, [77th Field Artillery Regiment](#) (Steel)
- 704th [Brigade Support Battalion](#) (Blacksmiths)

Combat Aviation Brigade (Heavy), 4th Infantry Division (Iron Eagle) (Activates April 16, 2014)

- 1st Battalion (Attack/Reconnaissance)
- 2nd Battalion (General Support), 4th Aviation Regiment
- 3rd Battalion (Assault), 4th Aviation Regiment
- 4th Battalion (Attack/Reconnaissance), 4th Aviation
- 404th Aviation Support Battalion

The division is supported by the [43rd Sustainment Brigade](#) at Fort Carson.

4th Infantry Division March

“Steadfast and loyal,
We’re fit to fight!
The nation’s finest Soldiers,
Keep liberty’s light.
Our Soldiers roar for freedom,
We’re fit for any test.
The mighty 4th Division ...
America’s best!”

4th Infantry Division patch

The division’s insignia had been adopted by its first commanding general, Maj. Gen. George H. Cameron. The insignia consists of four green ivy leaves on a khaki background. The division derived its numerical designation from the Roman numeral “IV,” hence the nickname, the Ivy division. The division’s motto is “Steadfast and Loyal.” ■



4th Infantry Division patch.

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