

An Overarching View of the 101st Airborne Division's History¹

Time and time again, the 101st has kept their *Rendezvous with Destiny!* and, in so doing, has acquired a proud and storied history that includes:

The Screaming Eagles -Little Rock, Arkansas (1954)

Following the United States Supreme Court's historic ruling on *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* (1954) unrest broke out in Little Rock Arkansas as Governor Orval Faubus ordered the Arkansas National Guard to support the segregation of nine black students who were enrolled and scheduled to attend school at the previously all white Little Rock Central High. In September 1959, President Dwight D. Eisenhower responded to the tension -and in support of the Supreme Court's decision- federalized the National Guard, removing them from Governor Faubus' control and ordered the Screaming Eagles 1st Airborne Battle Group to Little Rock (Operation Arkansas) to restore order and protect the students. The professionalism and restraint of the 101st is credited with helping to defuse the situation, restoring order, and upholding the Supreme Court's historic decision and the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Vietnam Eagles (1965-1972)

On 29 July 1965, the 1st Brigade landed at Cam Ranh Bay and became the third United States Army unit to arrive in the Republic of Vietnam. The 1st Brigade (Separate) would see fierce fighting as the "Nomads of Vietnam." For their heroic actions at Dak To and Trung Luong, they would receive two Presidential Unit Citations, the highest award given to a unit of the United States Army. In December 1967, the remainder of the 101st deployed to Vietnam, making history as the largest and longest airlift operation directly into a combat zone.

During the enemy's TET offensive, which began on 31 January 1968, the Screaming Eagles were engaged in battle from Saigon to Quang Tri. From May 1968 through February 1969, the division conducted Operation Nevada Eagle, and successfully denied the rice crop of Thua Thien province to the enemy. The division also tamed the infamous A Shau Valley, long used as a base area and infiltration route by the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong. At the end of 1969, activities turned towards civil affairs and a pacification program. In the fall of 1971, the 101st began its return home that culminated in an official welcome ceremony at Fort Campbell on 6 April 1972.

In the Republic of Vietnam, the 101st Airborne Division fought in 45 operations, spanning nearly seven years. Desperate pitched battles like Dak To, Tet, Hamburger Hill and Ripcord would be added to the storied history, legend, and lore of the 101st Airborne alongside Normandy, Holland and Bastogne from WW11. Throughout South Vietnam, the division demonstrated its strength and spirit as a fighting unit, but the 101st also discovered some individual heroes: Seventeen Screaming Eagles earned the Congressional Medal of Honor for their actions in combat.

Beginning a New Era (1974)

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In February 1974, Major General Sidney B. Berry, Commanding General, signed general order 179, authorizing wear of the airmobile badge (later redesigned the air assault badge and approved for wear army-wide in January 1978). Finally on 4 October 1974, the 101st Airborne Division (Air Mobile) became the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)!

Tragedy in Gander (1982)

In March 1982, elements of the 101st began 6-month tours of peacekeeping operations in the Sinai Desert as part of the Multinational Force and Observers. The presence of the United States and other international partners helped to ensure a tenuous peace between Egypt and Israel and achieve stability for the region. Tragedy struck in December 1985 when 248 Screaming Eagles - most from the 3rd Battalion, 502nd Infantry- died in a plane crash at Gander Newfoundland while returning home from the Middle East. The loss of so many Screaming Eagles on a single day remains the nation's worst military air tragedy and a deep wound in the Fort Campbell Community.

Annually, surviving Families and Fort Campbell Soldiers gather on the anniversary of the tragedy to honor the fallen and mourn their loss at the grove of Canadian Maples planted in their honor. In 2019, the original Gander Memorial was decommissioned as part of the Week of the Eagles. A new Gander Memorial Park was constructed and is about three times the size of the original memorial area. This was necessary due to the loss of so many of the original Canadian Maples due to overcrowding. The new Gander Memorial was dedicated on 13 December 2019, the 34th anniversary of the crash.

Lightning of the Storm: Desert Shield and Desert Storm (1990-1991)

In August 1990, the 101st departed for Saudi Arabia to participate in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Initially deployed to deter any further aggression by Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein who had invaded the small country of Kuwait, the Screaming Eagles would master desert warfare over the months leading to the beginning of the ground war. Desert Shield became Desert Storm with the beginning of hostilities as AH-64 Apache helicopters from 1st Bn, 101st Aviation fired the first shots of the war by destroying Iraqi radar sites on 17 January 1991.

The success of the Screaming Eagles helicopter attack effectively blinded the Iraqi air defenses and opened the way for the "Shock and Awe" bombing campaign of the air war. During the ground phase of the Desert Storm, the combined arms teams of the 101st made the longest and largest air assaults in history, securing Iraqi territory in the Euphrates River Valley and cutting Highway 8 to secure the flanks for U.S. armored forces attacking Iraqi occupation forces in Kuwait.

The Screaming Eagles successful air assaults essentially closed the escape of Iraqi's retreating forces and allowed for a short, but overwhelming victory for the United States and its coalition forces. Iraqi forces sustained heavy losses of their retreating forces with some units nearing total destruction. With the cease fire ordered on 28 February 1991, the 101st began preparations for redeployment. By 1 May 1991, the Screaming Eagles were back home. Desert Storm cemented the reputation of the 101st Airborne Division, Air Assault as one of the most effective and lethal formations in the world.

Humanitarian Aid turns to Conflict: Somalia (1992-1996)

In response to severe drought and famine that created a humanitarian disaster in the failed state of Somalia, President William J. Clinton ordered military and humanitarian operations in Somalia expanded in 1992 and 1993. The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) was once again called upon and deployed combat service support and aviation assets from 5th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment to support forces in that country. On 2 September 1993, elements of the 9th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment which replaced the 5th Battalion came under hostile fire that wounded a door gunner. On 25 September 1993 another Blackhawk came under fire and crashed, killing the crew and passengers.

The losses foreshadowed events to come in the battle of Mogadishu on October 3rd as U.S. Rangers and the 16th SOAR would lose 18 soldiers and two helicopters shot down by rocket propelled grenades in the pitched battle. The 9th Battalion returned home to Fort Campbell in February 1994. In 1995 and 1996, the division continued to support U.S. Army and United Nations peacekeeping missions with soldiers deployed to Panama, the Sinai, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

Fighting the Global War on Terror (2001-2002)

In response to the 9-11 terrorist attacks, elements of the 101st deployed to protect susceptible facilities within the United States from the possibility of further terrorist attack. The 3rd Brigade Combat Team (RAKKASAN) deployed to Afghanistan in November 2001. Their first mission was to protect key facilities necessary for the further prosecution of the war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. They participated in multiple combat operations including Operation Anaconda, a 10-day battle in March 2002 in the Sha-i-Kot Valley. This operation dealt a crippling blow to the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The 3rd Brigade Combat Team redeployed in the summer of 2002.

The Iraq War (2003)

In February and March 2003, the Screaming Eagles deployed to Kuwait and began their next “Rendezvous with Destiny” as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In a grueling movement of 571 kilometers through hostile territory and through a series of ferocious engagements in several major cities, the division exhibited its flexibility, lethality, and tremendous firepower at every turn, fighting its way to South Baghdad. The division’s air and ground operations were instrumental in the defeat of elements of the Medina, Nebachudnezzar and Hammurabi Republican Guard Divisions; the liberation of An Najaf, Karbala, and Al Hillah; and the clearance of South Baghdad.

Ordered to Northern Iraq on 22 April 2003, the division conducted the longest air assault in history and quickly assumed responsibility for Iraq’s second largest city of Mosul and four Northern provinces. Recognizing the importance of helping Iraqis return to work and the need for a safe environment, the division concentrated on the goals of rebuilding, training, and equipping the Iraqi Police; restoring the integrity of Iraq’s international borders through the formation of the Border Police; securing critical infrastructure by establishing Facilities Protection Service; and creating the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps as a critical arm of Iraq’s new army. The Screaming Eagles also conducted the first provincial election in Iraq, killed Saddam’s

sons Uday and Qusay, underwrote the completion of over 5,000 construction projects, and captured over 500 members of anti-coalition forces.

A New Structure. (2004)

A new type of war required a new organization for Army units to be more flexible and self-sufficient. They were restructured under the new Army Transformation Organizational Structure. The 101st Airborne would be among the first to restructure into the new organization. In January and February 2004, the 101st Airborne Division redeployed to Fort Campbell with a new mission. The period at Fort Campbell was to be a busy period as the Division restructured itself into a modular division with four Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) that integrated Military Intelligence, Logistics, Engineer and Signal units into part of the Infantry Brigade's organic structure. The modularity concept was to make each BCT a self-sustaining and independently deployable organization. This also brought the 506th Infantry Regiment of World War 11 back to the Division as the 4th Brigade: "Currahees" joined "Bastogne," "Strike," and the "Rakkasans." The newly restructured Division readied itself for redeployment.

Iraqi Counterinsurgency. (2005-2007)

In late 2005, the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) deployed to Iraq for the second time since 2003. This was, however, different than previous deployments as the Division Headquarters, designated as Task Force Band of Brothers, and augmented by the attachment Brigade Combat Teams from the 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized) and the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized), assumed responsibility for most of northern Iraq by November 2005.

The Division's mission included four major objectives: Training Iraqi Security Forces; protecting Iraqi energy and other infrastructure; neutralizing anti-Iraq forces; and establishing legitimate local governments. Screaming Eagle troopers assisted in Iraq's constitutional referendum and its unprecedented national election. Screaming Eagles and Iraqi Soldiers worked side by side to prepare 1,316 polling sites throughout northern Iraq. For the first time, Iraq's civilian population was allowed to fully participate in the democratic process.

Partnered with four Iraqi Army Divisions and over watching a fifth, Task Force Band of Brothers effectively trained Iraqi soldiers and helped them to earn the trust and confidence of their people. Once trained and reasonably equipped, Iraqi soldiers began conducting offensive operations. Alongside Iraqi Security Forces and U.S. Army Special Operations units, the Screaming Eagles executed many successful "kinetic" combat operations in which terrorist instigators and financial facilitators were severely disrupted. Such operations resulted in the detention of thousands of insurgents and the capture of 80 high-value targets. By the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom 2005-2007, the Division had transitioned major parts of its battle space to Iraqi units.

As part of the Army's "transformed" configuration of Brigade Combat Teams being the basic maneuver element, major elements of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) took the Screaming Eagle's reputation for tenacity and resilience on the battlefield to nearly every corner of Iraq. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team and the 4th Brigade Combat Team, both attached to the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized), participated in intense combat and stability operations in southern Baghdad's densely packed urban sprawl. The 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry, as part of Multinational Forces West, participated in combat operations in some of Iraq's toughest

neighborhoods around Ramadi. The 159th Combat Aviation Brigade worked in direct support of Multinational Corps Iraq by providing rotary wing helicopter support to nearly every unit in Iraq.

The Division returned to Fort Campbell in November 2006 after adding another illustrious chapter to its history. Once again, the Screaming Eagles had proven their unsurpassed flexibility, aggressiveness and determination under extreme conditions and against a dedicated and clever enemy. This mission was not accomplished, however, without great sacrifice. In October and November 2007, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Brigade Combat teams deployed to Iraq as separate units attached to various Army Division Headquarters and immediately began combat operations.

CITF-101 Afghanistan (2008-2015)

In February 2008, the Division Headquarters and 4th Brigade Combat Team deployed to Afghanistan where the Division assumed command of Afghanistan Regional Command East along the Pakistan-Afghan border. They assumed command on the 101st day of the year.

In March 2008, the Division Headquarters (and its Special Troops Battalion), the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) joined the 4th Brigade Combat Team and the 101st Sustainment Brigade in Afghanistan in support of Enduring Freedom. As combined Joint Task Force-101 (CITF-101), the Division Headquarters was supported by many attached Coalition units, was responsible for an area of operation the size of Pennsylvania, and was designated Regional Command East. Composed of 14 provinces, including much of the volatile border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as the Hindu Kush and Afghan Central Highlands, Regional Command East was posed with a unique and difficult set of challenges unlike anything previously experienced.

The soldiers of CITF-101 thrived in their role as both Soldier/Diplomat and Warrior. CITF-101 helped restore the Afghan people's confidence and trust in their government while improving their quality of life through more than 2500 innovative development projects. As warriors, CITF-101 aggressively trained Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and, side by side, relentlessly pursued insurgent groups wherever they were found. After a brief respite at home, the Screaming Eagles returned to their training activities in preparation for its next rendezvous with destiny. The Division's year at "home" was marked by intensive training, deployments to the Combat Training Centers, and validations of its preparedness for the challenges of conducting combat operations in the rugged and unforgiving environment of Afghanistan.

When the Army planned its "surge" in Afghanistan, it leaned heavily on the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). By late 2009, the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) began its deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The Rakassans were closely followed by 1st and 2nd Brigade Combat Teams and the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, respectively. On June 14th, 2010, Headquarters, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) took up its CITF-101 designation again and resumed control of Regional Command East: the volatile Afghan provinces adjacent to the Federally Administered Tribal Area of western Pakistan. For the first time, the entire Division was deployed to Afghanistan. Although divided between two major commands, Regional Command East and Regional Command South, the Division brought its unique capabilities and tenacious reputation to the battlefield with the objective of helping Afghanistan secure its people and resume its rightful place among the peaceful community of nations.

Throughout 2010, all four Combat Brigade Teams, the 101st Sustainment Brigade, and both of the Division's Combat Aviation Brigades deployed to Afghanistan throughout the year. The 101st Division Headquarters commanded RC-East for the second time as the entire Division was deployed into the same theater of operations. This deployment would be a hard-fought year as each of the BCTs would take the fight to the Taliban and other Anti-Afghan forces.

During the summer and fall of 2012, elements of the Bastogne and Strike and Rakkasan Brigade Combat Teams -as well as the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade- again would deploy to Afghanistan. This deployment would, however, be focused primarily upon the growth and development of the Afghan military as the Screaming Eagles began the mission of training and assisting their Afghan counterparts. In early 2013, the Division Headquarters as well as the 101st Sustainment Brigade and the "Currahees," of the 4th Brigade Combat Team deployed again to Afghanistan. This would be the 3rd time the 101st Div HQ commanded RC-East in five years. The Division would continue to focus on building Afghan capacity for self-security and governance as the United States exit strategy.

As 2013 progressed, elements of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Brigade Teams, and the 101st CAB, redeployed home to Fort Campbell. A chapter in the Division's history closed on October 16, 2013, as the Pathfinders of F Co., 5th Battalion, 101st Aviation made their last parachute jump on Corregidor DZ, becoming the last unit in the 101st Airborne Division to leave parachute status. It was fitting that the Pathfinders, who had led the airborne assault into Normandy, would be those who made the final parachute jumps while wearing "Old Abe."

In early 2014, the 101st Division HQ, 101st Sustainment Brigade, and the remaining elements of the 4th BCT returned home from deployment to Afghanistan while elements of 2nd BCT and 159th CAB deployed to Afghanistan. This again began a period of change and restructure as the Division received instructions to deactivate the 4th Brigade Combat Team. In response to budget and other constraints, the 1st Bn, 506th would be placed into the 1st BCT, and 2nd Bn, 506th would join the 3rd BCT. The Strike Brigade would receive both the 1st Bn, 26th Infantry, formerly of the 1st Infantry Division, as their third infantry battalion and the 2nd Bn, 320th Field Artillery, formerly of the "Big Red One."

Along with this restructure, each BCT's Special Troops Battalion would become a Brigade Engineer Battalion. 1st BCT would retain the 326th Engineers while 2nd BCT would gain the 39th Engineers and the Rakkasans 21st Engineers. Also of significance, the command and control of the Division's Artillery units would be reconsolidated under the newly reactivated Division Artillery (DIVARTY) in the fall of 2015.

A Dangerous New Threat (2014-2015)

The Division's respite from deployment would be short lived. In the fall of 2014, the 101st Airborne Division Headquarters was notified that it would deploy to Liberia, a country in West Africa, in support of Operation Unified Assistance. The Division Headquarters was ordered to lead the response to an epidemic outbreak of the deadly Ebola Virus. This action was in response to mounting pressure to take action as infected travelers who'd recently been to Africa returned to the United States and infected others with the deadly disease. The spread of the disease showed that it was imperative to the security of both the United States and the world to get the outbreak under control.

After an intense train-up, and only 29 days after its official notification, the Screaming Eagle Division Headquarters and approximately 700 soldiers from the 101st Sustainment Brigade

and 86th Combat Support Hospital deployed to Monrovia, Liberia and immediately set about their task. Although it was not a combat deployment, the Screaming Eagles faced some of the same struggles as much was lacking in terms of support or infrastructure to begin training Liberians to reduce the number of infected and treat those already infected.

The mission was expected to be at least 18 months in duration as the disease presented a complex problem set, but in just a matter of 5 months, the 101st Airborne Division, Air Assault, had built 17 Ebola Treatment Units, moved tons of supplies, established mobile labs for testing, and trained over 1,500 Liberian healthcare workers. This resulted in the Liberians having both increased capabilities and confidence in dealing with the disease. And there were fewer than a few cases a week in a country that saw hundreds just months prior.

In August of 2015, Gen David M. Rodriguez presented the Joint Meritorious Unit Award, the second highest award a unit may receive, in recognition of the Screaming Eagles' efforts as part of Operation Unified Assistance. In the spring of 2015, as the Strike BCT and 159th CAB redeployed from their train and assist missions in Afghanistan, the Division announced that the 159th would be deactivating. This was part of the larger restructuring of Army Aviation but was a tremendous loss to the Air Assault Division. On 7 May 2015, the "Thunder Brigade" was deactivated after 18 years of service and a lineage that began with the 101st in Vietnam.

And 2015 continued at a hectic pace for the Screaming Eagle Division. The BCTs continued their support to Afghanistan and its military. The 3rd BCT would find itself conducting train and assist missions in the Laghman Province of Afghanistan until October of 2015, following a nine-month deployment.

A New Mission in Iraq (2016-2017)

The Division Headquarters and the 2nd BCT received notification that they would soon be deploying again to Iraq. The Screaming Eagles were to take command and control of Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command-Iraq and Operation Inherent Resolve. This mission to destroy the Islamic state -or Daesh, in the native tongue- marked the beginning of a new chapter of the 101st's involvement in the middle east and a return to familiar territory in Iraq. The Division Headquarters worked in conjunction with nineteen other coalition nations to enable the Iraqis to drive Daesh from Iraq. The 2nd BCT "Strike" joined the Division Headquarters and played a pivotal role in the train, advise and assist strategy. Strike had teams deployed to Kuwait, Iraq, and Turkey as they helped to reorganize, train, and facilitate Iraqi operations against ISIS fighters, vehicles, and indirect fire assets with accurate and lethal fires in support of the Inherent Resolve Mission. The Strike brigade also oversaw the emplacement of bridges, repaired and established airfields, and helped orchestrate the resettlement of 100,000 people who returned home after the fighting had ended and Daesh removed. The 101st Airborne Division and 2nd Brigade redeployed back to Fort Campbell in late 2016 and early 2017.

Return to Afghanistan. (2018-2021)

The return to Fort Campbell was not to last for long. In 2018, the 101st Airborne Division Headquarters was again called upon to return to Afghanistan and Operation Resolute Support. They would be joined by the 101st DIVARTY and the 101st Main Command Post. The Screaming Eagles would oversee NATO's Train, Advise, and Assist mission as well as U.S. counter-terrorism operations. On 13 August 2021, all U.S. Armed Forces exited Afghanistan.

The Next Rendezvous

The 101st has a legacy of valor and service nearly unmatched by any other unit. The Division has been largely deployed for nearly two decades in the 20-year intergenerational War on Terror. Truly, this is the first time ever where one generation of Screaming Eagles hands the fight off to their own children. There have been hundreds of Screaming Eagles who have fallen in service to the nation and their comrades. Their sacrifices have not been in vain as the past 20 years are not without achievement.

The Division's efforts in Afghanistan starting in 2001 have greatly contributed to successful and decisive operations at every level, producing a significantly improved Afghan National Security Force. Now largely independent, they are committed to the defense of their country and continue to make huge sacrifices to bring peace and stability to the country. Their continued presence and assistance ensure that the country will not again become a launching place for terror.

Similarly, Screaming Eagles in Iraq measurably improved the quality of life of the Iraqi people and their thrust in the Iraqi Army. 1st BCT is currently deployed to Iraq as part of the Operation Inherent Resolve mission. They assist our allies in continuing to bring stability to the region. Every Screaming Eagle should be proud of their efforts to assist Afghanistan and Iraq in resuming their rightful place among the peaceful community of nations.

As we honor our past, however, we must also look to the future. There are still threats to our country, both overt and covert, that require committed efforts to deter or defeat. As the Army's premier combat force and the world's only Air Assault Division, the 101st will undoubtedly be called upon again to meet a future "Rendezvous with Destiny!"

“RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY”

**101st Airborne Division
Screaming Eagles
Campaigns and Decorations**

World War II

*Normandy (With Arrowhead)
Rhineland (With Arrowhead)*

*Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe*

Vietnam War

Counteroffensive Phase III
Tet Counteroffensive
Counteroffensive Phase IV
Counteroffensive Phase V
Counteroffensive Phase VI
Tet 1969, Counteroffensive

Summer-Fall 1969
Winter-Spring 1970
Counteroffensive Phase VII
Sanctuary Counteroffensive
Consolidation I
Consolidation II

OPERATION DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

Defense of Saudi Arabia

Liberation and Defense of Kuwait

War on Terrorism

Iraq
Liberation of Iraq
Transition of Iraq
Iraqi Governance
National Resolution

Afghanistan
Consolidation II
Consolidation III

World War II

Presidential Unit Citation (Army), Streamer Embroidered NORMANDY
Presidential Unit Citation (Army), Streamer Embroidered BASTOGNE
French Croix de Guerre with Palm, Streamer Embroidered NORMANDY
Belgian Croix de Guerre 1940 with Palm, Streamer Embroidered BASTOGNE
Belgian Fourragere 1940
Netherlands Orange Lanyard

Vietnam War

Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Streamer Embroidered Vietnam 1968-1969 (HHC)
Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Streamer Embroidered Vietnam 1971 (101st ABN DIV)
Republic of Vietnam Civil Action Honor Medal, First Class, Streamer Embroidered Vietnam 1968-1970 (HHC)

Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army), Streamer embroidered SOUTHWEST ASIA 1990-1991

Streamer embroidered DEFENSE OF SAUDI ARABIA

Streamer embroidered LIBERATION AND DEFENSE OF KUWAIT

War on Terrorism

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army), Streamer embroidered IRAQ 2003

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army), Streamer embroidered IRAQ 2005-2006

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army), Streamer embroidered AFGHANISTAN 2013-2014

Joint Meritorious Unit Award Streamer embroidered Operation United Assistance 2014-2015

Army Superior Unit Award Streamer embroidered IRAQ 2014-2015