
The Round Tablette

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Welcome to the April meeting of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Tonight's speaker is Dr. Michael Doubler, soldier, Guardsman, teacher, and author of *Civilian in Peace, Soldier in War*. General John Vessey, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will talk about his experiences with the 34th Infantry Division (ID) in World War II, and also the development of the "Roundout/Capstone" Programs of the 1970s. Burdette Stiel will discuss his experiences as a replacement in the 112th Inf. Regiment, 28th ID, and Major General Rick Nash will review the deployment of the 34th ID during the recent Middle Eastern conflicts.

In November of 1938, after the "Munich Crisis", the army began planning an expansion of the force that included mobilization of the National Guard and Organized Reserve Corps. Under the authority of President Roosevelt's 8 September 1939 Proclamation of a National Emergency, the army began implementing the Protective Mobilization Plan of 1939. The President approved expanding the Guard from 200,000 to 235,000 men and increased the training expected for Guard units.

By April of 1940, the regular army had increased its enlisted strength from 174,000 to 230,000 men, well below the 280,000 man authorized level. The German invasions of the Low Countries, Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, and then France, combined with the shock of OPERATION DYNAMO (the Dunkirk evacuation), and the surrender of France on 25 June, the United States Congress in August authorized the induction of National Guard units into federal service for 12 months, ostensibly for training, though they authorized using the Guard to defend the Western Hemisphere and US territories and possessions (*i.e.*, including the Philippine Islands), and also passed the Selective Service and Training Act (18 September).

Guard induction began with the federalization of the 30th, 41st, 44th, and 45th Divisions (not including armored and aviation units). Though quite understrength (averaging about 9,600 men each), these units overtaxed the available training camps. Additional Guard divisions were federalized and inducted, supplemented with draftees and brought to Table of Organization

(TO) standards. By spring of 1941, all 18 Guard divisions were federalized and training at divisional sized posts – the 34th ID reported to Camp Claiborne, LA on 10 February 1941.

Though federal law required the Guard divisions be organized under the same TO as regular army divisions, the General Staff was reluctant to reconfigure them from the "square" (4 regiments) format into the regular army's new "triangular" (3 regiments) form, especially since it would mean eliminating general and field grade officers. The reality that many of these senior Guard officers were physically and or professionally unfit for active service only made the situation worse.

Minnesota maintained the 92nd Infantry Brigade (and New York had the 93rd) which did not fit into the 1940 war plans. The 92nd was reorganized by the state into the 101st Coast Artillery Brigade, and New York converted the 93rd to the 71st Field Artillery Brigade, and both entered federal service under these new designations. (In October of 1940, the 92nd was reactivated as a Puerto Rican Guard Brigade, which was deactivated in July of 1942 after seeing no combat.)

The Guard also had 4 cavalry divisions (partially organized) and one cavalry brigade. Though an August 1940 study concluded the Guard needed both horse-mounted and mechanized units, the affected states objected to losing their horses, and the Armored Force thought armored divisions too complex and large for the Guard. On 1 November 1940, the 21st thru 24th Cavalry divisions were "withdrawn" or disbanded, leaving only Texas' 56th Cavalry Brigade, which entered federal service by the end of 1940.

The army faced a crisis in 1941. The Guard units were mobilized for 12 months of training, and the first units would soon be demobilized. What would happen to the draftees that filled out the units? The War Department sought and obtained from Congress an extension of active duty time for the Guard and its men which allowed their participation in the General Headquarters Maneuvers in the summer and fall of 1941.

In October of 1941, Lt. Gen. Walter Short, commanding the Hawaiian Department converted the "square" Hawaii division into the 24th ID, and activated the 25th ID, using 2 existing Guard and 4 regular regiments as the nucleus. After Pearl Harbor, as the need to dispatch Guard regiments overseas became

If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or coldpatton@yahoo.com

clear, the War Department realized the Guard divisions had unnecessarily large non-combat components, and on 1 February 1942, began transforming them into “triangular” 3 regiment formations. Component infantry brigades and their headquarters companies were disbanded, and field artillery brigade headquarters batteries were designated divisional artillery.

In January of 1942, Task Force 6814, created from Massachusetts and Illinois Guard units “surplus” to divisional restructuring, was dispatched to defend New Caledonia in the Pacific. There were not enough units to form a full division, so Maj. Gen. Alexander Patch decided the new division he was ordered to form would carry a name rather than a number. After soliciting suggestions from the men assigned, he chose Pfc. David Fonesca’s proposal – “Americal” (American Troops on New Caledonia) - and it was activated on 27 May 1942.

Air National Guard units were organized as “Observation Squadrons,” often attached to their state division or to Corps level aviation assets. (Minnesota’s 109th Observation Squadron was the first unit to gain federal recognition as part of the Guard in 1921.) In 1940, the units were not mobilized as such; instead, about 4,800 personnel were mobilized to augment regular army units, though some squadrons were later mobilized and equipped with modern plans and new missions, losing their Guard character in the process. [There is a dearth of work on mobilization of Guard aviation units.]

Cf. John B. Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower: The Evolution of Divisions and Separate Brigades*, (Center for Military History Publication 60-14, USGPO, 1998) (<http://www.history.army.mil/books/Lineage/M-F/index.htm>).

Further Reading:

- Michael Doubler, *Civilian in Peace, Soldier in War: the Army National Guard, 1636-2000* (University of Kansas Press, 2003).
- Michael Doubler, *Closing with the Enemy: How GIs Fought the War in Europe, 1944-1945* (University of Kansas Press, 1995).
- Peter Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe: the Triumph of American Infantry Divisions, 1941-1945* (University of Kansas Press, 2002).
- Robert Sligh, *The National Guard and National Defense: the Mobilization of the Guard in World War II* (Praeger, 1992).
- Martin Blumenson, *Bloody River: the Real Tragedy of the Rapido* (Texas A&M Press, 1998) is one excellent study of a Guard division at war – against both the Germans and the regular army.

Announcements:

- Twin Cities Civil War Round Table** - May 21, 2013 the Petersburg Campaign - www.tccwrt.com - info@tccwrt.com
- St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table** - April 22, 2013 Herman Haupt - Steve Anderson - 715-386-1268 – rossandhaines@comcast.net
- Rochester WWII History Round Table** –507-280-9970; www.ww2roundtable-rochester.org

Fort Snelling Civil War Symposium 13 April 2013, <http://www.tccwrt.com/symposium.html> or tccwrt@yahoo.com

- Minnesota Military Museum**, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>
- Air Show - Eden Prairie** - July, 13-14, 2013; <http://www.airexpo-mn.org/> - 952-746-6100
- Honor Flight** - Jerry Kyser - crazyjerry45@hotmail.com - 651-338-2717
- CAF - Commemorative Air Force** - www.cafmn.org or Bill at 952-201-8400
- Minnesota Air Guard Museum** - www.mnangmuseum.org 612-713-2523
- Friends of Ft. Snelling**, www.fortsnelling.org
- Fagen Museum** in Granite Falls, www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org. 320-564-6644
- World War II Weekend**, Historic Fort Snelling, 8-9 June 2013, <http://events.mnhs.org/calendar/index.cfm>
- Civil War Weekend**, Historic Fort Snelling, 17-18 August 2013, <http://events.mnhs.org/calendar/index.cfm>

Round Table Schedule 2013

9 May Kampfgruppe Peiper at Malmedy
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Men of the 135th Infantry, 34th Division, boarding train at the Great Northern Depot in Minneapolis bound for Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. MHS ID7382



135th Infantry, 34th Division, departs Minneapolis for training at Camp Claiborne. MHS ID7237



Camp Claiborne, LA, 1941 (www.campclaiborne.com)