



History of the 25th Infantry Division

Division Beginnings and World War II



The 25th Infantry Division was formed on 1 October 1941 at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Its lineage can be traced to the Hawaiian Division, which defended Hawaii from 1921 to 1941. The Division received its baptism of fire when Japanese forces attacked Oahu on 7 December 1941. In November 1942, the 25th Infantry Division was ordered into action against the Japanese in the Solomon Islands. Due to their superior performance during operations in the Solomons, the division earned the nickname "Tropic Lightning." The Division also took part in the liberation of the Philippine Islands, landing on the island of Luzon in

January 1945 and fought for 165 days without rest. After World War II, Tropic Lightning performed occupation duty in Japan.

The Conflict in Korea

On 25 June 1950 North Korean forces invaded South Korea. The 25th Infantry Division was called into action and deployed to South Korea in early July. Upon arrival they immediately began operations to defend the city of Pusan. After weeks of bitter fighting, the Division broke out of the "Pusan Perimeter" in September 1950 with U.S. and United Nations forces. Most of Korea was liberated when Chinese forces joined the fighting in November 1950, forcing the 25th Infantry Division and allied forces south once again. The Division began retaking lost territory in January 1951, fighting battles until 27 July 1953, when an armistice took effect. Tropic Lightning returned home in October 1954 after a twelve years, with the freedom of South Korea preserved.



The Vietnam War

In December 1965 the 25th Infantry Division deployed to fight in the Vietnam War. In a massive airlift, the 3rd "Bronco" Brigade deployed to the central highlands at Pleiku; while the Division headquarters, along with the 1st "Lancer" and 2nd "Warrior" Brigades, were transported by sea. By April 1966, all division units were in country with the headquarters established in Cu Chi district, 20 miles northwest of Saigon. During its five years in South Vietnam, the Division engaged in operations to destroy communist forces, to include fighting during the Tet Offensive of 1968, and offensives against enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia during



forces, to include fighting during the Tet Offensive of 1968, and offensives against enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia during 1970. In December 1970 Division units returned to Hawaii, with the 2nd Brigade being last to depart in April 1971.



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Transformation of the Division



The organization of the 25th Infantry Division changed in 1985 when it was selected to reorganize into a light infantry formation. In 1995, the 25th Infantry Division saw its first major deployment as a light infantry unit. Division headquarters, along with the 2nd and 3rd Brigades, were sent to Haiti as part of Operation Uphold Democracy from January through June 1995. From April to September 2002, the 25th Infantry Division continued its peacekeeping mission into the 21st Century as 1,000 Tropic Lightning Soldiers deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina. As part of Stabilization Force XI, Division troops took

part in mine clearing operations, reconstruction, and the destruction of weapons turned in by civilians.

In support of the Global War on Terrorism, the 25th Infantry Division was called to arms in July 2003 to prepare for deployment in 2004. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team deployed to northern Iraq in January 2004. The “Warrior” BCT engaged insurgent forces, while developing local security and government institutions. In September of that year, the 1st Brigade, newly transformed into a Stryker Brigade Combat Team, departed Fort Lewis, Washington, for Iraq’s Ninewa Province. The culmination of their deployments occurred in January 2005, when they supported free elections for all Iraqis. The 2nd Brigade returned home in March 2005, followed by the 1st Brigade in September.

In March 2004, the Division headquarters along with the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Division Artillery, 25th Aviation Brigade, and Division Support Command deployed to Afghanistan. Soldiers of Tropic Lightning engaged in combat operations against Al-Qaeda and Taliban forces, while also helping to rebuild a country ravaged by decades of war. In October 2004 free elections were held in Afghanistan, supported by Tropic Lightning Soldiers. By June 2005, all division units had returned to Schofield Barracks.

Immediately after returning, Tropic Lightning changed its organization as part of the Army’s program to transform into a more versatile, agile force. As part of transformation, a Special Troops Battalion was reactivated. The Brigades also changed, with the 2nd and 3rd BCTs becoming Stryker and Infantry Brigade Combat Teams respectively, and Aviation Brigade reorganized as Combat Aviation Brigade, 25th Infantry Division. Because of the return of heavy vehicles to Schofield Barracks, the 25th Infantry Division dropped its “light” designation on 1 January 2006. The 4th Brigade, 25th Infantry Division was reactivated in July 2005 as an Airborne Brigade Combat Team. Like the 1st BCT, the 4th “Spartan” BCT was not under Division control, but carried the patch and pedigree of a Tropic Lightning unit. Eventually both the 1st and 4th BCTs would come to call Alaska home.



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The Global War on Terrorism



After completing transformation, the Division Headquarters, Special Troops Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, and 3rd BCT deployed to northern Iraq 2006 as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08. Joined by elements from four other U.S. Army divisions, Task Force Lightning took control of Multinational Division-North.

Just a few months later, the 4th BCT deployed to central Iraq in October 2006. During the course of the deployment, both Task Force Lightning and 4th BCT focused on training Iraqi Security Forces, improving the effectiveness of local governments, and engaging in combat operations against insurgent groups. The climax of their deployments occurred during the summer of 2007, when Task Force Lightning and the 4th BCT dealt the enemy a severe blow in a series of offensives as part of the “The Surge”. In October 2007, Task Force Lightning completed its deployment, followed soon after by the 4th BCT in December.

As Division units were returning in October 2007, the 2nd BCT was preparing for its own deployment to Iraq. From January 2008

through March 2009, the 2nd BCT conducted operations just north of Baghdad to capitalize on gains made. While continuing to pursue insurgents and militias, the “Warriors” also helped Iraqi officials improve governance and security forces.

After a well deserved rest, the Division Headquarters, Special Troops Battalion, and 3rd BCT returned to northern Iraq starting in November 2008. Included among the U.S. Army units that comprised Task Force Lightning during Operation Iraqi Freedom 09-11 was the 1st BCT. This time, the focus was on partnership to support Iraqi institutions as they continued to pursue insurgents. In November 2009, Task Force Lightning was relieved by the 3rd Infantry Division. One of the units arriving to support Task Force Marne was the 25th Infantry Division’s own Combat Aviation Brigade. During its deployment, CAB 25ID provided air transportation and attack support. As a sign of things to come, CAB Soldiers began closing facilities at their base as part of the U.S./Iraqi Security Agreement before returning home in July 2010.

While most Tropic Lightning units returned to Iraq, the 4th BCT deployed to Afghanistan in February 2009. Taking charge of Paktika and Paktiya Provinces, the BCT engaged enemy forces and helped build government institutions in some of the most rugged terrain in the world. These lands were no stranger to Tropic Lightning; much of the same area was patrolled by the 3rd BCT when Tropic Lightning units were last in Afghanistan five years before. By February 2010, the 4th BCT had returned to Alaska.



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The Division Today



Just weeks after returning to Hawaii, a new change had come to the 25th Infantry Division. The Division headquarters was reorganized as Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 25th Infantry Division on 16 January 2010, replacing the Special Troops Battalion that was deactivated the same day. In December 2010, HHBN 25ID departed on its third deployment to Iraq.

However, northern Iraq was not the destination. Tropic Lightning was given the task of overseeing U.S. forces in Baghdad and Anbar Provinces during the last year of American military operations in Iraq. Task Force Lightning

had to maximize the time remaining to advise Iraqi Security Forces against the insurgent threat, while simultaneously transferring facilities as part of the U.S. troop withdrawal. These missions had to be completed by the end of the year, with less than half the number Soldiers Task Force Lightning had under its command in past deployments. Over the course of the deployment, Task Force Lightning pursued insurgents with the Iraqi Security Forces, while preparing bases and equipment for transfer to Iraqi authorities.

In the summer of 2011, Task Force Lightning was chosen to safeguard American troops as they repostured out of Iraq in accordance with the 2008 Security Agreement. By this order, the 25th Infantry Division was to be the last U.S. Army division to leave Iraq. By the time Task Force Lightning completed its mission on 18 December 2011, thousands of troops retrograded out of Iraq under its aegis, and dozens of bases were transferred to the government of Iraq. Through its outstanding performance, the 25th Infantry Division completed its final mission in Iraq with honor.

TROPIC LIGHTNING!