

CALIFORNIA MILITARY DEPARTMENT HISTORICAL PROGRAM
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History of the 140th Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion (SP)

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History of the 140th AAA Automatic Weapons Battalion (Self-Propelled) of the 40th Infantry Division, California National Guard

Background

The 140th AAA AW Bn SP is one of the five artillery battalions organic to the Division Artillery of the 40th Infantry Division. While a part of the California National Guard as the 272nd AAA AW Bn in July 1946, it is a part of a division whose history began in July, 1917.

40th Infantry Division

The 40th Infantry Division was first organized as such from National Guard units of California, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah on 19 July 1917. Since that time, the 40th has participated in World War I and II, the Korean Conflict, has served in overseas combat on three occasions, and, during peacetime, has been utilized by the State of California in disaster relief and the control of civil disturbances.

World War I. The overseas tour of service during World War I was in France and extended from 31 August 1918 until 30 June 1919.

World War II. In world War II the Division departed for service in the Pacific Theater on 23 August 1942 and remained overseas until 5 April 1946. During this period it trained in Hawaii and had its first taste of combat in the Solomon Islands on 22 April 1944. The Division received battle credits for campaigns in the Bismarck Archipelago, the Southern Philippines, and in Luzon, for which Presidential Unit Citations were awarded to elements of the Division, and for which the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation was awarded to the entire Division. Following the cessation of hostilities, the 40th performed occupation duty in Korea from whence it was returned to the US and demobilized on 7 April 1946 at Camp Stoneman, California. It was soon reorganized as the California National Guard and the first elements received Federal Recognition on 14 October 1946.

Korean hostilities. Following the outbreak of hostilities in Korea on 25 June 1950, the Division was ordered to Active Federal Service on 1 September 1950. It trained in California until 24 February 1951, when it was alerted for overseas shipment to Japan. The first elements departed the US on 29 March 1951 and arrived in Yokohama, Japan, on 10 April 1951.

The Division trained in Japan until 24 December 1951, when it was alerted for shipment to Korea. The Division arrived in Korea during the months of January and February 1952 and relieved the 24th Infantry Division near Kumwha. The Division has been in the line, with short periods of relief for reorganization and training, ever since, and has acquitted itself well in all its assigned missions.

The 40th Division Artillery

Division Artillery, composed of the 140 AAA Battalion and the 143rd, 625th, 980th, and 981st Field Artillery Battalions, has been continually engaged with the enemy in Korea since the day the 40th first relieved the 24th Infantry Division at Kumwha, thus fulfilling the age-old principle that "Artillery is never in reserve." Division Artillery has not only supported its own division while it was in line, but has in addition supported the 2nd and 12th ROK Divisions, and has frequently fired in support of Divisions on its flanks.

The 140th AAA AW Bn (SP)

These dates are important in the history of this Battalion. It was first organized as the 272nd AAA AW Bn on 13 July 1946, was Federally recognized 25 April 1947, and was redesignated as the 140th AAA AW Bn SP and assigned to the 40th Infantry Division on 1 February 1949, with which it has served since that date.

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In addition to these dates, there are others of interest. The 140th was ordered into active service with the 40th Infantry Division on 1 September 1950 and trained at Camp Cooke, California, until it departed for Japan; the first elements arrived in Yokohama on 10 April 1951. The 140th continued to train at Camp Schimmelpfennig until 24 December 1951, when it was alerted for shipment to Korea. The Battalion arrived in Korea on these dates: Hq & Hq Btry-11 January, 1952, A and B Btrys-22 January, 1952, and C and D Btrys on 3 February, 1952.

The 140th entered combat in the Kumwah Sector with the 40th Infantry Division on 28 January 1952, and has never disengaged since that date. Assuring the dual roles of AA protection and that of ground support of the infantry, this Battalion has fired over five million rounds of .50-caliber ammunition at the enemy in actions at the Iron Triangle, White Horse Mountain, Triangle Hill, Sniper Ridge, Jane Russell (now known as Margaret O'Brien), Papa San Mountain, Sandbag Castle, Joe Stalin Ridge, Luke the Gook's Castle, and Hill 812, just to mention a few.

This Battalion, or elements of it, have received commendations for their support in a wide variety of actions. In addition, Battalion personnel have received nine Purple Hearts, four Bronze Stars for Valor, 16 Bronze Stars for Meritorious Service, four Oak Leaf Clusters to Bronze Stars, 17 Commendation Ribbons, and one Soldiers Medal.

Battalion personnel have become proficient in firing indirect H & I fires, something for which the Quad 50 was never designed. To successfully carry out these fire missions, the Battalion, in addition to its other roles, learned to operate as a field artillery battalion and set up fire direction centers, which permitted the massing of a large number of machine-gun fires on enemy targets

across frontages of seldom less than two, and occasionally three divisions.

To maintain these enormous frontages, communication, transportation, supply, and mess personnel have performed their duties in a manner never foreseen by those who drew up the tables of organization and equipment for organizations such as this.

The Battalion personnel have continuously and well proved their ability to fulfill the motto, AGITO PRIMO FIRMITER AGITE appearing on its crest. It means: HIT FIRST, HIT HARD.

Bomac 09-03

