

# HONORING AMERICAN LIBERATORS



UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

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For almost two decades, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the U.S. Army's Center of Military History have worked together to define, recognize, and honor all the U.S. Army divisions that took part in the liberation of prisoners from Nazi concentration camps and other sites of incarceration.

In February 1985, two Holocaust survivors, Sigmund Strochlitz and Benjamin Meed, then serving as co-chairpersons on the United States Holocaust Memorial Council's Days of Remembrance Committee, formally requested permission from the Secretary of the Army, John O. Marsh, Jr., to display in the future Museum the flags of all the U.S. units that participated in the liberation of the Nazi camps. They also requested permission to present these colors at the Days of Remembrance ceremony held annually in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda in Washington, D.C. Several weeks later, the U.S. Army agreed to cooperate with the Museum in this important joint program.

In 1985, the Museum and the Center of Military History recognized some army divisions as liberating units: the 3rd, 4th, 6th, 10th, and 11th Armored Divisions and the 42nd, 45th, 80th, 90th, and 103rd Infantry Divisions.

Within two years, this program generated so much interest on the part of veterans' associations that the Museum and the Center of Military History developed further guidelines and procedures for handling future requests for liberator status. It was decided to recognize units only at the divisional level; to accord the honor of liberator status on the basis of unit records housed at the National Archives and Records Administration, not oral testimony; to accord liberator status to those divisions arriving at the site within 48 hours of the initial division's encounter. To further facilitate this process, requests for recognition were to come through a formal petition to the Center of Military History or the Museum from the divisional association or individual members of a division. As a result of these new guidelines ten more U.S. Army divisions were recognized as liberating units: the 12th, 14th, and 20th Armored Divisions, and the 4th, 8th, 71st, 89th, 99th, and 104th Infantry Divisions, along with the 82nd Airborne Division.

In the 19 years since this program was inaugurated, the Museum and the Center of Military History have recognized 35 U.S. Army divisions for their heroism, gallantry, and help in liberating prisoners from brutal Nazi rule. Each year, the names and flags of these units are presented in a moving tribute at the U.S. Capitol Rotunda for the Days of Remembrance ceremony. In addition, the Museum displays 20 divisional flags at its 14th Street entrance. The flags are rotated so that all the liberating units' colors are prominently exhibited for the two million visitors who walk through our doors each year.

To commemorate the unveiling of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., in 2004, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum once again honors the brave men and women who risked their lives to free their fellow human beings from bondage.

# U.S. Army Divisions Recognized as Liberating Units by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Center of Military History

## INFANTRY DIVISIONS

1st Infantry Division  
2nd Infantry Division  
4th Infantry Division  
8th Infantry Division  
26th Infantry Division  
29th Infantry Division  
36th Infantry Division  
42nd Infantry Division  
45th Infantry Division  
63rd Infantry Division  
65th Infantry Division  
69th Infantry Division  
71st Infantry Division  
80th Infantry Division  
83rd Infantry Division  
84th Infantry Division  
86th Infantry Division  
89th Infantry Division  
90th Infantry Division  
95th Infantry Division  
99th Infantry Division  
103rd Infantry Division  
104th Infantry Division

## ARMORED DIVISIONS

3rd Armored Division  
4th Armored Division  
6th Armored Division  
8th Armored Division  
9th Armored Division  
10th Armored Division  
11th Armored Division  
12th Armored Division  
14th Armored Division  
20th Armored Division

## AIRBORNE DIVISIONS

82nd Airborne Division  
101st Airborne Division

For further information about the origins of this program, see Edward J. Drea, "Recognizing the Liberators. U.S. Army Divisions Enter the Concentration Camps," *Army History. The Professional Bulletin of Army History*, Fall/Winter 1992/1993, 1–5.

# 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION

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The 82nd Airborne Division began its illustrious military career as an infantry division during World War I. Formed in May 1918, it saw service in France several months later.

In March 1942, the "All American" was reactivated for service and later that year was redesignated as an airborne division. In May 1943, the unit was sent to North Africa to prepare for the invasion of Italy. In July, the 82nd was dropped into Sicily and fought its way up the Italian peninsula to Naples by early October. On D-Day (June 6, 1944), the date when the Allies launched their massive invasion of western Europe, the "All American" was dropped behind enemy lines into Normandy, France. In September, the unit parachuted into the Netherlands, and, two months later, was redeployed to thwart the German offensive during the Battle of the Bulge. In February 1945, the division advanced into Germany, crossing the Elbe River before the war ended.

On May 2, 1945, the 82nd Airborne Division overran Wöbbelin, a subcamp of the Neuengamme concentration camp. At its height, Wöbbelin held some 5,000 inmates, many of whom were suffering from starvation and disease. Living conditions in the camp when the 8th Infantry and the 82nd Airborne arrived were deplorable. When the divisions arrived there, they found about 1,000 inmates dead in the camp. In the aftermath, the U.S. Army ordered the townspeople in Ludwigslust to visit the camp and bury the dead.

In accordance with a policy mandated by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the U.S. Army in Ludwigslust ordered "all atrocity victims to be buried in a public place." Crosses were to be placed at the graves of Christians and Stars of David at the graves of Jews, along with a stone monument to memorialize the dead.

On May 7, 1945, the 82nd Airborne Division conducted funeral services for 200 inmates in the town of Ludwigslust. Attending the ceremony were citizens of Ludwigslust, captured German officers, and several hundred members of the airborne division.

The 82nd Airborne Division was recognized as a liberating unit by the U.S. Army's Center of Military History and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1991.

# 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION

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*Casualty figures for the 82nd Airborne Division, European theater of operations*

Total battle casualties: 6,993

Total deaths in battle: 1,509

## *Division nickname*

The nickname for the 82nd Airborne Division originated in World War I, signifying the "All American" composition of its members. The troops who formed the division came from diverse areas of the United States.