

HONORING AMERICAN LIBERATORS



UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

HONORING AMERICAN LIBERATORS

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.

90TH INFANTRY DIVISION



The 90th Infantry Division was activated in summer 1917, just months after the United States entered World War I. It participated in several military campaigns in France. During World War II, the "Tough Ombre" division landed at Utah Beach on D-Day (June 6, 1944) as part of the massive Allied invasion of western Europe. After pushing through northern France, the unit advanced into the Saar region of Germany, but was redeployed to Belgium during the German offensive into the Ardennes (the Battle of the Bulge). The 90th returned to Germany and captured the city of Mainz on March 22, 1945. Several days later, the "Tough Ombre" division crossed the Rhine and subsequently moved southward into Bavaria and then eastward into Czechoslovakia.

On April 23, 1945, the 90th overran the Flossenbürg concentration camp, finding about 1,500 prisoners who had not been evacuated on death marches. The unit's journal recorded that one of its motorized patrols entered the camp that day and found "a serious typhus epidemic" in "full swing." The troops interviewed the surviving inmates, who estimated that Flossenbürg had held some 16,000 prisoners before the SS guards evacuated the camp on April 20. The SS had forced the prisoners to work in a nearby stone quarry and in a Messerschmitt plane factory, making fighter craft for the German air force.

After liberating Flossenbürg, the 90th discovered more evidence of Nazi atrocities as they advanced farther. Just prior to the camp's liberation the SS guards had forced some 14,000 inmates to march southward. The 90th and other army divisions found some 6,000 of these prisoners alive. They also discovered the bodies of more than 5,000 inmates, who had died from exhaustion or starvation or had been killed by the SS guards because they failed to keep up with the pace of the march.

The 90th Infantry 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 1985.

90TH INFANTRY DIVISION

Casualty figures for the 90th Infantry Division, European theater of operations

Total battle casualties: 19,200

Total deaths in battle: 3,951

Division nickname

Called the "Tough Ombres," the 90th Infantry Division was raised from draftees from the states of Texas and Oklahoma during World War I. The divisional insignia incorporates the letters *T* and *O* to symbolize both states. These letters later yielded the nickname "Tough Ombres," symbolizing the esprit de corps of the unit. The 90th was also sometimes called the "Alamo" division during World War II.