



1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment **Unit History**

The 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery was constituted in the Regular Army on 1 July 1916, as Battery A, 7th Field Artillery and organized in July at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. On 8 June 1917, the regiment was assigned to the 1st Expeditionary Division, later re-designated the 1st Infantry Division, and began a long tradition of service with the Big Red One. The unit arrived in France in 1917, and received its baptism of fire near the city of Luneville. On 22 October 1917, Battery A fired the first aimed American artillery round of the war. The 7th Regiment fought in seven World War I campaigns and adopted the motto “Nunquam Aerumna nec Proeilo Fractum,” Latin for “Never broken by hardship or battle” from a citation presented to the division by Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Commander of all French forces. The Battalion was awarded the French Croix de Guerre (Cross of War) twice as well as the French Fourragere. The 7th Regiment returned to the United States in September 1919 after occupation duty near the German city of Coblenz. A Battery was stationed at Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont during the inter-war years, remaining part of the 1st Infantry Division. The unit was reorganized on 1 October 1940 as Battery A, 7th Field Artillery Battalion and later as the 7th Field Artillery Battalion.

In World War II the 7th Battalion first saw action in Africa with the 1st Infantry Division. The battalion made three assault landings during the war including Algeria on 8 November 1942 and Sicily on 10 July 1943. After returning to the United Kingdom for preparation, the battalion participated in the invasion of France and on 6 June 1944 (D-Day) landed with the Big Red One on

Omaha Beach at Normandy, France. Battery C, 7th Field Artillery Battalion was the first unit to fire a land-based artillery mission on the Normandy beaches. The battalion fought sustained combat operations in France, Belgium and Germany, culminating in Czechoslovakia in 1945.

Throughout the war, the unit distinguished itself in battles such as Kasserine Pass, Mons, Huertgen Forest and the Battle of the Bulge. The “Lucky 7th”, as the unit was known, earned eight campaign streamers and was awarded the French Croix de Guerre twice and the Fourragere in the colors of the Medaille Militaire (Military Medal). The Belgian government cited the 7th Field Artillery Battalion twice in the “Order of the Day” and awarded it the Belgian Fourragere. After the war, the 7th Field Artillery remained in Germany, operating throughout Bavaria as part of the occupation force until July 1955.

It returned stateside to Fort Riley, Kansas on 30 July 1955. In February 1957, it was inactivated but immediately reorganized as Headquarters Battery, 1st Howitzer Battalion of the 7th Artillery Regiment. On 20 January 1964 the unit was again re-designated as 1st Battalion, 7th Artillery under the new army system.

On 25 June 1965 lead elements of the battalion arrived in Vietnam, becoming the first soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division to set foot on Vietnamese soil. Operating in support of 2nd Brigade, the battalion closed on Vietnam in July and established positions vicinity of Bien Hoa and Cam Rah Bay. The battalion again made history as Charlie Battery, supporting 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, fired the first American artillery rounds of the war.

The battalion served in Vietnam until 19 March 1970 when it returned to Fort Riley, Kansas. During its Vietnam tour the 105mm howitzers of the battalion fired more than 1,250,000 rounds in 55 months of continuous combat. The battalion carried the nickname “Pheons” during its Vietnam service for the three pheons, or arrowheads that adorned the unit crest during this period symbolizing the battalion’s three beach landings during World War II.

In Vietnam the battalion earned eleven campaign streamers, two Meritorious Unit Commendations, and three Republic of Vietnam unit awards, and provided fire support in such areas known as the Iron Triangle, Thunder Road, and Hill 714.

On 1 September 1971, the battalion was re-designated as the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery. It was inactivated at Fort Riley on 25 March 1983, ending 66 years of continuous service with the 1st Infantry Division. On 24 September 1986, the battalion was reactivated as an element of the 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, New York. During its service with the 10th Division, the battalion deployed soldiers in support of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm in support of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions. The battalion also provided elements in support of Operations

Restore Hope in Somalia, aided in the relief of Florida after Hurricane Andrew, and secured Haiti during Operation Uphold Democracy. The battalion inactivated at Fort Drum in December 1995.

The 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery returned to the 1st Infantry Division on 16 February 1996 and activated in Schweinfurt, Germany. The battalion took the nickname of “First Lightning” because of the long-line of firsts achieved by the unit throughout its history. In September 1996 the battalion deployed with the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division to Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of Operation Joint Endeavor/Joint Guard. For its outstanding service, the battalion was awarded the Army Superior Unit Award.

The battalion returned to the Balkans on 24 June 1999 as part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, in support of Operation Joint Guardian II in the province of Kosovo, former Republic of Yugoslavia. During this operation, the battalion again made history on 30 July 1999 as Alpha Battery fired the first artillery rounds in hostile action in the Balkans in support of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry. On 4 August 1999 the battalion fired in support of the 13th Russian Tactical Group (Airborne) marking the first time since World War II that an American artillery unit fired in support of a Russian army unit.

In February 2004, 1st Battalion, 7th field Artillery deployed from Germany to Operation Iraqi Freedom with the 1st Infantry Division conducting full-spectrum lethal and non-lethal operations in around the city of Tikrit. The battalion was awarded the Valorous Unit Award for its heroism in action on 9 November 2004. In August 2006 the battalion again deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team serving as the area defense operations center for Camp Liberty in Baghdad until November 2007.

The battalion was inactivated at Schweinfurt, Germany on 16 March 2008 and the colors returned to Fort Riley, Kansas where the unit was activated along with the 2nd “Dagger” Brigade, 1st Infantry Division on 28 March 2008. On 8 October 2008 the battalion deployed to Iraq for its third tour in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The battalion performed missions as the Camp Liberty area defense operations center in Baghdad before assuming duties as the International or “green” Zone security force in February 2009. In addition, the battalion provided artillery fires in support of maneuver forces and conducted convoy escort missions throughout Baghdad, earning its third Meritorious Unit Commendation and returning home to Ft. Riley on 18 September 2009.

The 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment recently completed a year-long tour in Baghdad as part of Operation New Dawn from November 2010 to October 2011. During this period of service, the Battalion earned its fourth Meritorious Unit Commendation and the Combat Action

Battalion Streamer for having 82% of its assigned personnel receive the Combat Action Badge. Its primary role was to advise and assist the Iraqi 1st Federal Police Division. This historic operation marked the end of the US mission in Iraq.

Today the “First Lightning” Battalion continues as a living legacy to our predecessors who fought on the battlefields of Europe, the jungles of Vietnam, and the desert sands of Iraq. The motto, “Never broken by hardship or battle”, truly emulates the spirit of our Soldiers in their ability to overcome the most extreme hardships during battle, and carry on the mission. The soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, remain part of the 1st Infantry Division’s Dagger brigade.