



Force Structure and Unit History Branch

Using History For A Better Force Structure



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U.S. Army units, like today's soldiers, have their own individual service record. Units display their history and battle honors on their flags, or "colors". These honors are a source of unit pride, and whenever soldiers gather to compare the unit decorations on their uniforms there is an inherent "competition" for honors. General George S. Patton once stated that decorations make "the men who get them proud and determined to get more" and those "who have not received them jealous and determined to get some in order to even up." He went on to praise decorations as "the greatest thing we have for building a fighting heart."

The Army did not originally have a system for tracing unit history and honors. Units simply embroidered on their colors the names of the battles in which they fought, but units often disagreed about what differentiated a "skirmish" from a "battle" or a "campaign." By the 1920s, however, the Army found that it needed to standardize its battle honors and created an office to do impartial research on unit histories (often tracing them through a variety of redesignations) and to determine campaign participation credit. The determination of unit lineage and honors, one of the Army's oldest official historical functions, is just one of the current missions of the U.S. Army Center of Military History's Force Structure and Unit History Branch (formerly called the Organizational History Branch). The branch administers two major programs: one for Organizational History and another for Force Structure Support. Because it selects which units to activate and determines or verifies the unit honors displayed on flags and guidons (and thus what individual soldiers wear on their uniforms), the Force Structure and Unit History Branch affects almost every unit and soldier in the Army.

Organizational History

Branch historians determine the lineage and honors of Army units from all components that are organized under Tables of Organization and Equipment (TOEs). Following the general guidelines laid down in Army Regulation (AR) 870-5, Military History: Responsibilities, Policies, and Procedures, they conduct research in primary and secondary historical sources. This research is then converted into a highly standardized and concise history called a Lineage and Honors Certificate (when printed on parchment with an official War Department seal and signed for the Secretary of the Army by the Chief of Military History) or a Statement of Service (the same historical information printed on plain paper). The Army Support Office of the Soldier Systems Directorate, U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command, requires that units submit one of these documents to requisition their flags or guidons, campaign streamers or silver bands, and decoration streamers. These documents also certify a unit's entitlement to a special designation (like the 10th Cavalry's "Buffalo Soldiers") and to unit historical files and property. This information also is used by The Institute of Heraldry to design unit heraldic devices, including coats of arms and shoulder sleeve and distinctive insignia.

Branch personnel respond to thousands of official inquiries for organizational history information each year. In addition to answering requests from units, the branch routinely provides information to members of Congress, the U.S. Total Army Personnel Command's Military Awards Branch, the Army Board for Correction of Military Records, the U.S. Armed Services Center for Research of Unit Records, the American Battle Monuments Commission, the Army Staff, field operating agencies, major Army commands, and others. Although official inquiries take precedence, the branch answers requests from veterans and their family members, academics, authors, and other parties as time and resources permit. Besides AR 870-5, the branch's organizational history activities are covered in AR 600-8-22, *Military Awards*, and AR 840-10, *Heraldic Activities: Flags, Guidons, Streamers, Tabards, and Automobile and Aircraft Plates*.

Force Structure Support

During the 1980s, the Office of The Adjutant General transferred several important missions to the branch, including

responsibility for maintaining the official rolls of the Army. As part of this function, branch historians record activations, inactivations, redesignations, and other significant changes in unit status. By order of the Secretary of the Army, the branch also issues unit change-in-status directives. As the Army's official arbiter of unit designations and long names (the term for the complete official designation entered into joint databases), historians decide what official designations will be used by all TOE units and various organizations established under Tables of Distribution and Allowances. The branch is the only authority for updating long name entries in Headquarters, Department of the Army, databases such as ASORTS (Army Status of Resources and Training System, part of the Joint Staff's automated command and control system), and also selects which units to activate. For example, when the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans (DCSOPS) approves the addition of units to the Army's force structure, the Force Structure and Unit History Branch coordinates with the U.S. Army Force Management Support Agency to identify an appropriate unit and its historic unit identification code (UIC). Historians use information provided by the DCSOPS (such as TOE functional mission, location, and other pending or planned force structure actions) to select units with appropriate history for activation. Once the unit and its UIC have been chosen and entered into the proper databases, major Army commands can begin documenting unit activations and issuing permanent orders. Staff members frequently work with the commands to ensure that orders accurately reflect the force structure actions coordinated through the branch. Throughout the Army's unit activation process, branch members often find themselves involved with issues beyond those of a strictly historical nature. For instance, reflecting the importance of UICs to an "automated" Army, our historians have resolved conflicts that surfaced when incorrect UICs or designations were placed in logistical databases and verification was required to allow new units to receive their authorized equipment.

The Force Structure and Unit History Branch also advises the Army Staff and field commands during significant Army reorganizations, downsizings, and reflaggings. The historians prepare order of merit lists and provide other types of historical support for the purpose of retaining the units with the most distinguished and suitable history whenever possible. As the Army redesigns its force structure and prepares new TOEs, the historians coordinate with force developers and documenters to determine the official unit designations that are published as part of the TOEs. Using its collection of historic TOEs, the branch is often asked to provide information on the structure and authorized strength of various units. Developers and planners use this information for determining potential combat strength, for wargaming, and for improving future organizational designs. Although the Army's size has decreased in the last decade and there are fewer active units in the force structure, the job of maintaining the Army's rolls has not become easier. An increasing number of unit reorganizations and redesignations have kept the branch's historians busy to the point that force structure support dominates the official caseload. Branch responsibilities and authorities in these areas are set forth under AR 220-5, *Designation, Classification, and Change in Status of Units*; AR 71-32, *Force Development and Documentation*; and AR 600-82, *The U.S. Army Regimental System*.

Preparing for the Future

Due to the large number and variety of Army organizations, the branch's small staff divides its caseload based on the Army's functional branches. This specialization allows the historians to become familiar with and develop expertise in the particular organization and history of their assigned branches. Branch historians continue to prepare volumes in the popular Army Lineage Series and, as needed, other studies (information papers, monographs, and pamphlets) on issues relating to unit history and structure. The Army's force structure planners, TOE developers, Training and Doctrine Command schools, and others use this information to help understand how the Army has structured itself in the past as they prepare for the future. As an integral component of the Army's institutional memory, the branch is ready to assist as the Army transforms itself to meet the challenges of a new century. It was actively involved, for example, in the development of the new Brigade Combat Teams. Through the years the Army has found that using branch historians as action officers for current and future force development issues serves to connect the Army's past, present, and future and creates a better force structure.

Submitting Requests for Assistance

Its varied responsibilities mean that many people, from soldiers updating their personnel files to veterans researching their wartime experiences, contact the branch to verify their units' decorations and service. The branch responds to approximately 4,000 inquiries per year, with over a quarter of these from unofficial sources. Due to limited staffing and resources, the branch can only accept telephonic requests for information from units and official government agencies. (Please note that Regular Army and Army Reserve units requesting the preparation of Lineage and Honors Certificates must still submit written requests—see address below. Army National Guard units should send correspondence through the National Guard Bureau.) Veterans, unofficial researchers, and other members of the general public may also send written requests for information that will be answered as resources permit. The working files of the Force Structure and Unit History Branch may be made available to researchers, who should make an appointment well in advance to ensure that the appropriate historian is available to provide assistance. Branch files contain only documents that support the creation of unit Lineage and Honors Certificates, and very limited information is available on the operational activities of particular units during the nation's various military campaigns. (Please note that the branch maintains neither unit operational records nor records of unit personnel.) Additional information about the Center of Military History (CMH) and about the location of unit records is available through CMH ONLINE at www.history.army.mil. The branch's address is

Commander
U.S. Army Center of Military History
ATTN: DAMH-FPO
102 4TH AVE BLDG 35
FORT MCNAIR DC 20319-5060
Phone: Commercial (202) 685-2733; DSN 325-2733

Force Structure and Unit History Branch An Overview

Major Responsibilities:

- Determine the lineage and honors for Army TOE units of all components
- Maintain the rolls of the Army
- Determine official designations and select units for activation
- Determine entitlement to unit historical files and property
- Prepare studies as needed on issues relating to unit history
- Prepare volumes in the Army Lineage Series

Publications (available through official distribution channels or from the Government Printing Office):

Army Lineage Series

- Armor-Cavalry: Part I* (1969)
- Armor-Cavalry: Part II* (1972)
- Infantry: Part I* (1972)
- The Continental Army* (1983)
- Air Defense Artillery* (1985)
- Field Artillery* (1985)
- Aviation* (1986)
- Armies, Corps, Divisions, and Separate Brigades* (1987; Revised 1999)
- Military Police* (1992)
- Military Intelligence* (1998)
- Maneuver and Firepower: The Evolution of Divisions and Separate Brigades* (1998)
- Signal Corps (under preparation)

Army Historical Series

Getting the Message Through: A Branch History of the U.S. Army Signal Corps (1996)

Army Regulations (for which the branch is sole proponent)

AR 220-5, *Designation, Classification, and Change in Status of Units*

A pamphlet entitled *Organizational History* is available upon request to assist unit historians in the preparation of unit histories and the establishment and maintenance of organizational history programs.

Other Products:

- Lineage and Honors Certificates
- Statements of Service
- Unit Day Certificates
- Special Designation Certificates