



173rd Airborne Brigade History

The 173rd Airborne Brigade has a long and distinguished history of over 45 years of service spanning almost 88 years.

The Brigade originally was activated in 1917 as the 173rd Infantry Brigade and assigned to the 87th Infantry. The Brigade deployed to France as part of the Division, but did not see any major combat action. The Brigade was demobilized in January of 1919 at then Camp Dix, New Jersey.

The Brigade went through a series of re-designations and reorganizations, culminating in the re-designation in February 1942 as the 87th Reconnaissance Troop, 87th Division.

The Brigade experienced extensive combat in Europe as part of General George S. Patton's Third Army, to include the battle of the Bulge and the Rhine river crossing. In 1945, The brigade again was deactivated, this time at Fort Benning, Georgia.

In 1947, the Brigade was briefly activated as the 87th Mechanized Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, deactivating again in December 1951.

The Greatest chapter of the Brigade's history began in 1963. The 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) was activated on the island of Okinawa on March 26, 1963. The "Sky Soldier" as the nationalist Chinese paratroopers called the 173d, made thousands of parachute jumps in a dozen different pacific area countries. The Brigade was the first Army unit sent to the republic of South Vietnam in May 1965.

In the combat operations to follow, the paratroopers made their superb training payoff. They were the first to go into "War Zone D" to destroy enemy base camps. They introduce small, long range patrols. They fought the battles of the iron triangle, conducted the only major combat parachute jump in the Tay Ninh Area, and blocked NVA incursions during the bloodiest fighting of the war at "Dak To" during the summer and fall of 1967, culminating in the capture of "Hill 875". Elements of the Brigade conducted an amphibious assault against NVA and VC forces as part of an operation to clear the rice growing lowlands along the "Bong Song" Littoral.

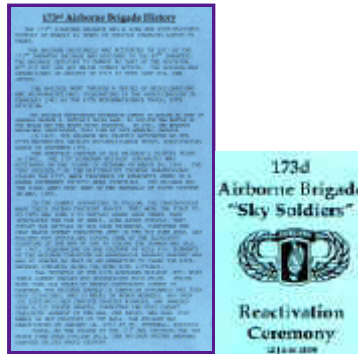
The Troopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade wear their combat badges and decorations with pride. During more than **six years of nearly continuous combat** in Vietnam, The brigade earned four unit citations, had 13 Medal of Honor winners, had over 130 distinguished service crosses winners. 1731** Sky Soldiers were killed in action and another 8,345 were wounded in action. These 10,076 casualties incurred by the Brigade were **five** times greater than the 187th Airborne Regiment in Korea, **four** times greater than those suffered by the 11th Airborne Division in the Pacific in WWII, more than **twice** those suffered by the 101st Airborne Division in Europe in WWII, and **two thirds** of those suffered by the entire 82nd Airborne Division in WWII. The Brigade took part in 14 designated campaigns and conducted **the only U.S. line combat parachute assault** of the Vietnam war. The Brigade was Deactivated on 14 January 1972 at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

On 12 June 2000, the colors of the 173d Airborne Brigade were unfurled for the first time over Italian soil in Vicenza, Italy, as the Brigade began another chapter in its proud history.

On 26 March 2003, The 173rd Airborne Brigade again became the only line Airborne unit to perform a combat jump when it parachuted 1000 paratroopers into Northern Iraq to open the Northern front in support of operation Iraqi Freedom. This was the **largest combat parachute operation since WWII**. The jump was the **longest combat operation in airborne history**, over 1800 miles from Vicenza to Iraq. The Brigade participated in 9 designated campaigns in Iraq. In March 2004, the Sky Soldiers return from combat operations in Iraq. Nine Sky Soldiers died and approximately 95 were wounded in Iraq during the deployment. The Sky Soldiers of the 173d Airborne Brigade spent 2004-2005 training and preparing to meet the challenges of the war

on terror. Then in February 2005, the 173rd Airborne Brigade again returns to combat operations. This time for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

** KIA data contributed to "Bruce Swander" Dataport47@comcast.net Jan 2005



[173rdAirborne.com](http://www.173rdairborne.com)