



Condensed History of the "Wildcat" Division

The history of the 81st U. S. Army Reserve Command began in August, 1917, when Headquarters, 81st Division was organized at Camp Jackson, South Carolina. It adopted the name "Wildcat Division" from Wildcat Creek, which flowed through the reservation. Legend also has it that the troops found a snarling wildcat on the banks of this creek

The 81st Division began a practice which was unheard of in those days. A distinguishing shoulder patch -- a black wildcat on an olive drab circle -- appeared on 81st Division uniforms, causing other units to protest loudly. The matter reached the attention of General John J. Pershing, who approved the Wildcat trademark. Moreover, he praised the esprit de corps exhibited by the 81st, and suggested that other Army divisions adopt distinctive patches.

Those same World War I "Wildcats" distinguished themselves in the fighting in France, participating in the occupation of the St. Die sector and the offensive at Meuse-Argonne. Again the 81st received the personal commendation of General Pershing.

Following World War I, the "Wildcat" Division was demobilized on June 11, 1919, at Hoboken, New Jersey.

After the start of World War II, the 81st was activated in June, 1942, at Fort Rucker, Alabama, and was committed for nearly a year in Pacific campaigns. The division was engaged in action in Peleliu, Ulithi, Ngesbus, Congaru, and Garakayo. Later, it was part of the Army of Occupation of Japan. On January 20, 1946, the division was inactivated.

The 81st was re-activated as a Reserve division on November 10, 1947, in Atlanta, Georgia. It was considered for recall to active duty during the Korean War, but was not activated. In December, 1965, the division was again inactivated.

Two years later, in January, 1968, it was re-activated as a headquarters which soon thereafter became the headquarters of the 81st U. S. Army Reserve Command.

The black wildcat on the olive drab circle is still worn today as the only representative patch of the 81st U. S. Army Reserve Command.

Prepared by
Office of Public Affairs
81st U. S. Army Reserve Command