



# The National Guard in World War I

The National Guard contributed to the total success of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in World War I; it defied predictions of failure as it transformed from a collection of local militias into a well-trained and disciplined fighting force which led the U.S. entry to Allied victory.

### EVENTS LEADING TO WAR

The National Defense Act of 1916 transformed the National Guard into the nation's chief reserve force. That year's "Great Mobilization" to the Mexican Border marked the first effort for the National Guard to ready for a national emergency.

### DRAFT, REORGANIZATION AND MOBILIZATION

After United States entry into World War I in April 1917, the U.S. Army drafted the National Guard into federal service to enter consideration for overseas service that August. As the entire Guard mustered near full strength later that year, the Army reorganized via 18 mostly geographical divisions, in a sequential numerical order that developed a greater bond into "one Army."

The Guard forged a stronger *esprit de corps* and provided prompt firepower to Allied forces. It required extensive domestic training after they mobilized, prior to the deployment to Europe.

### "OVER THERE"

Eleven of 17 Guard divisions fought as intact units, or served as "depot" divisions that filled positions in the ranks. Its role in multiple offensive actions accelerated the Allied timetable at a rate faster than envisioned by U.S. General of the Armies, Gen. John J. Pershing.

National Guard divisions (*distinctive insignias at right*) deployed in a united front with the active Army during the fierce campaigns against Germany in 1918. Their presence proved decisive.

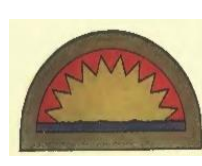
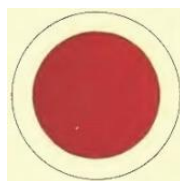
The National Guard exhibited exemplary valor in combat. Corporal Thomas A. Pope of the 33rd Division, Illinois National Guard, was the first National Guardsman to earn the Medal of Honor for his actions at the Battle of Hamel, France on July 4, 1918. The 30<sup>th</sup> "Old Hickory" Division earned 12 Medals of Honor in the Second Somme Offensive, the most among any division in the Army. The National Guard's segregated 15<sup>th</sup> New York (later, 369<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment) displayed unflagging endurance, spending 191 days in combat.

### DECISIVE CAMPAIGNS and THE ARMISTICE

In fall 1918, the Meuse-Argonne proved decisive projecting Allied advances versus the German Army. Hostilities ended on November 11, 1918, at 11:11 am local time.

The German supreme command named six Guard combat divisions among eight American units as "superior" or "excellent" after the Armistice. Despite some fractures among Divisions, this assessment served to reinforce the quality of the National Guard and the soldiers that served in the nation's first war fought on the European continent.

## NATIONAL GUARD DIVISION DISTINCTIVE UNIT INSIGNIAS



Distinctive Unit Insignias (DUIs), 26<sup>th</sup> through 42<sup>nd</sup> Divisions, 1917-19, read from upper left to right, row 1: Yankee; Empire; row 2, Keystone; Blue & Gray; Old Hickory; row 3, Dixie; Red Arrow; Prairie; row 4, Sandstorm; Santa Fe; Arrowhead; row 5, Buckeye; Cyclone; Delta (unofficial design); row 6, Sunburst; Sunset; and, Rainbow.

<b>National Guard Combat Divisions with Special Designations, arranged by Unit Campaign Participation and Order of Arrival to Europe, 1917-18</b>				
Unit	States/Region	Special Designation	Recognized Campaigns	Arrival of First Element
26 <sup>th</sup>	New England (ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, RI)	“Yankee” Division	Champagne-Marne, Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, Ile de France, Lorraine 1918	20 Sept 1917
27 <sup>th</sup>	New York	“Empire” Division	Somme Offensive, Ypres-Lys, Flanders 1918	7 May 1918
28 <sup>th</sup>	Pennsylvania	“Keystone” Division	Champagne-Marne, Aisne-Marne, Oise-Aisne, Meuse-Argonne, Champagne 1918, Lorraine 1918	16 May 1918
29 <sup>th</sup>	VA, MD, DC, NJ	“Blue & Gray” Division	Meuse-Argonne, Alsace 1918	8 June 1918
30 <sup>th</sup>	TN, SC, NC	“Old Hickory” Division	Somme Offensive, Ypres-Lys, Flanders 1918	14 May 1918
32 <sup>nd</sup>	WI, MI	“Red Arrow” Division	Aisne-Marne, Oise-Aisne, Meuse-Argonne, Alsace 1918, Champagne 1918	6 Feb 1918
33 <sup>rd</sup>	IL	“Prairie” Division	Somme Offensive, Meuse-Argonne, Lorraine 1918, Picardy 1918	18 May 1918
35 <sup>th</sup>	MO, KS	“Santa Fe” Division	Meuse-Argonne, Alsace 1918, Lorraine 1918	13 Apr 1918
36 <sup>th</sup>	TX, OK	“Arrowhead” Division	Meuse-Argonne	31 May 1918
37 <sup>th</sup>	OH	“Buckeye” Division	Ypres-Lys, Meuse-Argonne, Lorraine 1918	18 Jun 1918
42 <sup>nd</sup>	DC and 26 states	“Rainbow” Division	Champagne-Marne, Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, Champagne 1918, Lorraine 1918	1 Nov 1917

<b>Remainder of National Guard Divisions in World War I assigned as “Depot” (Levied Replacement) Units or Skeletonized, arranged numerically</b>			
Unit	States/Region	Special Designation	Actions Upon Arrival in Europe
31 <sup>st</sup>	AL, FL, GA	“Dixie” Division	Became 7 <sup>th</sup> Depot Division; was “skeletonized” on 17 Oct 1918; i.e., disassembled
34 <sup>th</sup>	MN, IA, NE, ND, SD	“Sandstorm” Division*	Personnel used as replacements; skeletonized 17 Oct 1918
38 <sup>th</sup>	IN, KY, WV	“Cyclone” Division	Personnel used as replacements; skeletonized 17 Oct 1918
39 <sup>th</sup>	LA, MS, AR	“Delta” Division	Designated as 5 <sup>th</sup> Depot Division; skeletonized 29 Oct 1918
40 <sup>th</sup>	CA, NV, UT, AZ, NM, CO	“Sunburst” Division	Designated as 6 <sup>th</sup> Depot Division on 16 August; functions as a levied unit, to receive, train, equip, and forward replacements.
41 <sup>st</sup>	WA, OR, ID, MT, WY, ND, SD, CO, NM, DC*	“Sunset” Division	Designated as Replacement Division, I Corps, 8 December 1917; Jan. 15, 1918, Division is redesignated as the Base and Training Division, I Corps; 5 March 1918, redesignated as Depot Division, I Corps. 13 July 1918, Division is redesignated as the 1st Depot Division, AEF. Other units detached and served under different divisions.



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