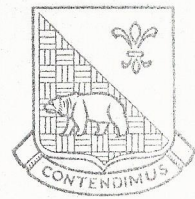


CENTRAL DIVISION  
144TH FIELD ARTILLERY  
ASSOCIATION



HISTORY OF THE 144th FIELD ARTILLERY

During the summer of 1917 a group of citizens of San Francisco, California, organized a National Guard regiment of field artillery. On August 2, 1917, the Militia Bureau, by telegram, increased the allotment of artillery regiments to California from one to two and on August 3 this regiment was mobilized at Tanforan, near San Francisco, and by letter from the Militia Bureau to the Adjutant General of California on August 5, 1917, was given federal recognition as of August 4 and designated the Second California Field Artillery.

The Second California Field Artillery was drafted into Federal Service on August 5, 1917, in compliance with the President's Proclamation and was finally mustered into Federal Service on August 31, 1917.

The 144th Field Artillery was organized from the Second California Field Artillery on October 3, 1917, by General Orders No. 17, Headquarters, 40th Division and was incorporated into that division. After a period of training at Camp Kearney, California, the regiment was sent to France as part of the 40th Division, arriving there on August 24, 1918. While in France the division was at first used as a replacement unit and later became the 6th Depot Division.

Returning from France in January, 1919, the 144th Field Artillery was mustered out of Federal Service on January 29, 1919 pursuant to Circular No. 106, War Department, 1918.

On April 16, 1936, the Second Battalion, 196th Field Artillery was redesignated Second Battalion, 144th Field Artillery in compliance with the 8th indorsement, to letter AG 325.455 (3-7-36), from the War Dept., Adjutant General's Office to the National Guard Bureau, June 2, 1936, thus specifically reconstituting the World War I 144th Field Artillery.

In compliance with instructions from the War Department to the Adjutant General of California (N.G.B. letter 325.4 (FA) Calif-36 July 23, 1940), the remaining units of the 144th Field Artillery were activated and the regiment was Federally recognized as of August 20, 1940.

## History of 144 FA

Units of the regiment were organized and stationed as follows:

Hq & Hq Btry, 144 FA Regt	Santa Barbara
Band	Santa Barbara
Medical Detachment	Santa Barbara
Hq & Hq Btry, 1st Bn	Bakersfield
Battery A	Santa Maria
Battery B	Bakersfield
Battery C	Santa Barbara
Service Battery, 1st Bn	Bakersfield
Hq & Hq Btry, 2d Bn	Santa Monica
Battery D	Ventura
Battery E	Oxnard
Battery F	Riverside
Service Battery, 2d Bn	Santa Monica
Hq & Hq Btry, 3d Bn*	Santa Paula

\*Subsequently redesignated Hq & Hq Btry, 76th FA Brigade

In accordance with the provisions of Executive Order 8633 dated January 14, 1941 and General Orders, Headquarters California National Guard, the 144th Field Artillery regiment (155mm Gun), California National Guard, was inducted into Federal Service on February 3, 1941, and moved to Fort Lewis, Washington, for training.

With the outbreak of hostilities on December 7, 1941, the First Battalion of the regiment was placed on coast defense in the Gray's Harbor Sector of Washington, and the Second Battalion was rushed to defend vital points along the coast of Southern California. The regiment remained split in this manner until October of 1942 when the Second Battalion was relieved of coast defense duty in California and joined the regimental headquarters and the First Battalion, also relieved of coast defense duty, at the Field Artillery Firing Center at Yakima, Washington.

On February 17, 1943 the regiment was reorganized as the 144th Field Artillery Group with its two battalions becoming the 980th and the 981st Field Artillery Battalions, attached to the Group. On April 16, 1943 the Group headquarters and its two attached battalions along with other units of the 76th Field Artillery Brigade moved to the California-Arizona maneuver area. After an intensive training period of four months on the desert the group and its battalions moved to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, where it was stationed and trained for about three months.

On November 20, 1943 the group moved to a staging area in preparation for overseas movement, and sailed from the Port of Boston for the United Kingdom on December 29, 1943, arriving in Liverpool, England in January. Leaving the 980th and 981st Field Artillery Battalions in England, the Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 144th Field Artillery Group moved to North Ireland on

## History of 144 FA

January 11, 1944. After four months of training among the peat bogs and at the firing range of the Sperrin Mountains in North Ireland, the 144th moved to Wigpool Common, near Ross-on-Wye, England.

Upon its arrival in the United Kingdom, the 144th was assigned to XV Corps and because of its long experience with heavy artillery became the long-range group of the XV Corps Artillery. It landed in France as part of the XV Corps and the Third Army at Utah Beach on July 16, 1944 and went into bivouac with other corps artillery units in the vicinity of Sortosville, France.

The Corps became operational on July 29th and on August 4th, the Group, with three Field Artillery Battalions attached, moved out the Coutances-Avranches break-through with the 79th Division on the entire "end run" through Fougères, Laval, Le Mans and thence north to close the so-called "Falaise Gap." The first fires against the enemy were placed in the Forêt de Perseigne on August 12, 1944. Up until this time the fires of the heavy artillery had not been needed.

On August 19, 1944 the Group, still in support of the 79th Division, reached the area in the vicinity of Mantes-Gassicourt and positions were occupied to harass the enemy crossings of the Seine, and interrupt traffic on the other side. On September 8th the Corps began a movement northeasterly and the 144th Group and its battalions moved to positions near Diarville to support the Moselle River bridgehead at Charmes. On September 19th the group moved to positions to support the attack of Luneville and later the Forêt de Parroy. In October the XV Corps, then in the vicinity of Luneville, was transferred from the Third to the Seventh Army.

The 144th Group participated in the XV Corps drive which liberated Strasbourg in November 1944. Following that drive it took up positions near Enchenberg where its battalions played a prominent part in the reduction of the forts surrounding Bitche. When the XV Corps was moved westerly following the German counter-attack of December the 144th Group moved to Puttelange. In March 1945 the group left Leyviller and shortly thereafter was marching with the rest of the XV Corps Artillery in the drive through Saarbücken to the Rhine.

On March 27, 1945 the 144th Group crossed the Rhine River at Worms, Germany, with the "Bear Flag" of the California Republic flying from the radio antenna of one of its vehicles. Following a generally northeasterly direction the group supported the attacks on Aschaffenburg and Schweinfurt and then moved into position for the assault on Nuremberg. Following the capture of Nuremberg the

## History of 144 FA

XV Corps moved swiftly southward, crossed the Danube River and captured Munich. On March 7th the 144th Group arrived in Wals, Austria where it was still stationed at the close of hostilities with Germany on May 9, 1945.

After their separation from the Group Headquarters at Liverpool in January 1944, the 980th and 981st Field Artillery Battalions (the two original battalions of the 144th) were sent to southern England and attached to the VII Corps of the First Army for training. Battery B of the 980th F. A. Battalion was temporarily detached from the rest of the battalion and went ashore in Normandy on D plus 1, the first heavy artillery to land. The remainder of the 980th and the 981st followed very quickly and both battalions supported the attack on Cherbourg.

Both battalions served with the VII Corps of the First Army during combat and were among the first (if they were not actually the first) heavy field artillery units to fire across the German border (at Aachen). The 981st had a record of about 340 days of continuous combat without having a gun out of the line. Both battalions were accorded battle participation credit for the following five major campaigns: Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland, Central Europe.

Following the close of hostilities the 144th Group was stationed in Austria. In December 1945 the remaining personnel were transferred to the 84th Division for return to the United States and Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 144th Field Artillery Group was inactivated.

The 144th Field Artillery Group travelled a total distance of 1690 miles in seventy combat moves between July 16, 1944 and May 9, 1945. It was the recipient of numerous letters of commendation from higher headquarters and received battle participation credit for the following four major campaigns: Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Central Europe.

From its arrival in North Ireland in January 1944 to the close of combat in May 1945 the 144th Group was attached continuously to the Artillery of the XV Corps except for a temporary attachment to XXI Corps for one week in January 1945. It served in combat under assignment to the First, Third and Seventh United States Armies. Among the divisions which were supported by the 144th Field Artillery Group in campaigns through France and Germany into Austria were the following: 3rd, 42nd, 44th, 45th, 79th and 90th Infantry Divisions; 5th and 20th Armored Divisions, and the 2nd French Armored Division.

## History of 144 FA

The 144th Field Artillery Group had under its control at one time or another in combat about twenty-two different field artillery battalions. The armament of these battalions included the following heavy artillery pieces: 155mm Howitzer, 155mm Gun, 155mm SP Gun M 12, 240mm Howitzer, 4.5" Gun, 8" Howitzer, 8" Gun.

During its period of training in the United States from 1941 to 1943 the 144th Field Artillery Group, through the organization of about eleven special training batteries for which it furnished the cadres, gave basic field artillery training to some two thousand newly inducted soldiers. The group contributed a large number of enlisted men to officer candidate schools and former members of the 144th served in all theaters of the war.