

CALIFORNIA MILITARY DEPARTMENT HISTORICAL PROGRAM  
North Highlands Annex, Joint Forces Headquarters  
3900 Roseville Road  
North Highlands, California 95660

# **251<sup>st</sup> Coast Artillery Regiment (Anti-Aircraft): A Historical Summary**

By Fergus J. Carmody  
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THE 251st C.A. (AA) REGIMENT  
AN HISTORICAL SUMMARY



This document represents a first draft attempt to collect and organize pertinent data relating to the 251st C.A. (AA) Regiment. Since this effort is an outgrowth of requests received at annual Regimental "Pearl Harbor Reunions", its emphasis is upon the events immediately preceding and during World War II.

Authenticated data relating to the Regiment's early history is incomplete and probably inaccurate at this time, as is data relating to past World War II reorganization. Former members of the organization who have accurate information or documents which would aid in completing this historical summary by the time of the next reunion should write or contact the newly appointed reunion historian listed on the next page.

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*Fud Carmody*

Fergus J. Carmody, Chairman  
251 C.A (AA) Regiment  
Pearl Harbor Reunion  
37th Anniversary  
December 2, 1978



HISTORIANS REQUEST FOR DATA

Former members of the 251st Regiment who have factual information or documents which would help to fill in the gaps and/or errors in this initial Historical Summary are urged to write or contact the Reunion Historian listed below at any time:

Bob Macdonald  
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*Bob Macdonald*

Patrol 3, Company 1, 251st  
251st C.A. (A.A.) Regiment  
Pearl Harbor Reunion  
2700 Highway  
December 2, 1978

THE 251st C.A. (AA) REGIMENT

THE COAT OF ARMS



DESCRIPTION

"THE SHIELD IS RED FOR ARTILLERY. THE SIX PALLETS COUPED PRODUCE A DIMINISHED BORDURE EFFECT ON THE SHIELD AND REPRESENT THE SIX BATTERIES COMPRIZING THE REGIMENT AT THE TIME OF ITS ORGANIZATION. THE SHIP IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SHIP OF DON JUAN RODRIGUEZ CABRILLO, A PORTUGUESE, WHO DISCOVERED SAN DIEGO HARBOR.

THE CHARGES ON THE CANTON, THE FLEUR-DE-LIS ENCIRCLED BY A GARLAND OF LAUREL, ARE TAKEN FROM THE COAT OF ARMS OF THE 250TH COAST ARTILLERY, AS BATTERY B OF THE 251ST COAST ARTILLERY, CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD IS A DESCENDANT OF BATTERY F OF THE 250TH COAST ARTILLERY, CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD WHICH SERVED DURING WORLD WAR I AS B BATTERY OF THE 65TH COAST ARTILLERY."

BLAZONRY

SHIELD: SIX PALLETS COUPLED GULES, A SHIP OF CABRILLO'S TIME ARGENT; ON A CANTON AZURE A FLEUR-DE-LIS ENCIRCLED BY A GARLAND OF LAUREL OF THE FIRST.

CREST: THAT FOR THE REGIMENTS AND SEPARATE BATTALIONS OF THE CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD: ON A WREATH OF THE COLORS (OR FULES) THE SETTING SUN BEHIND A GRIZZLY BEAR PASSANT ON A GRASSY FIELD, ALL PROPER.

MOTTO: WE AIM TO HIT

AUTHORITY

THE COAT OF ARMS DESIGNATED FOR THE 251ST ARTILLERY, CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD WAS:

"A. ORIGINALLY APPROVED FOR THE 251ST COAST ARTILLERY (HARBOR DEFENSE), CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD, BY LETTER AG 424.5 COASTS OF ARMY (1-11-26) (MISC.), OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL, 9 JANUARY 1928.

B. REDESIGNATED FOR THE 746TH ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY GUN BATTALION, CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD, BY LETTER QMGHB 424.2 746TH AAA GUN BN, OFFICE OF THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL, 7 JANUARY 1952."

(Extracted from Ltr. dated 16 February 1961, Institute of Heraldry, U.S. Army, Cameron Station, 510 Duke Street, Alexandria, Virginia; QMIH-A 424.2 and 42.2, 251 Arty, CNG.)

## 251 C.A. (AA) REGIMENT

### EARLY HISTORY AND WORLD WAR I

The lineage of the 251st Regiment of the California National Guard traces back to parent units organized on September 16, 1916 as companies of the 2nd Coast Defense Command, Coast Artillery Corps; element of this organization were called into Federal Service on August 5, 1917.

The 250th Coast Artillery of the California National Guard was also mobilized during World War I. This organization saw active duty in France and was credited with service during the Meuse and Argonne campaigns. As noted in the Coat of Arms description, Battery B of the 251st Regiment is a descendant of Battery F of the 250th, thus the fleur-de-lis on the Regimental insignia.

The 251st Regiment was demobilized by early 1919 and not reorganized as part of the Coast Artillery Corps until 1922. In December of 1924 the organization was designated as the "251st C.A. Regiment (Harbor Defense); On January 1, 1930 the title was changed to the "251st C.A. Regiment (Anti-Aircraft)."

### MOBILIZATION, 1940

The 251st C.A. (A.A) Regiment of the California National Guard was inducted into Federal Service on September 16, 1940 for a period of one year by Executive order 8530; the one-year period of active duty was later extended for an additional year by Congressional action on August 12, 1941.

At the time of mobilization into Federal Service, the Regiment was composed of the 1st Battalion (75mm) Located in San Diego and the 2nd Battalion (37mm) located in Long Beach.

During November of 1940, following staging in Ventura, around 1200 Guardsmen of the Regiment left the port of Los Angeles for duty on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. Part of this contingent sailed as first-class passengers aboard the civilian luxury ship s.s. Washington, others on a second, less luxurious vessel, the USS Leonard Wood. Upon arrival in Hawaii, the Regiment trained for two months at Fort Ruger and Shafter. Then, it moved to its permanent Hawaiian department location at Camp Malakole where it began its ritual of spending half a day on the firing line and the balance of the day construction its own camp.

### THE MALAKOLE SAGA

The following article, quoted in its entirety, appeared in the Honolulu Advertiser on January 21, 1941 under the title of "The Saga of the 251st C.A.":

"This is the interesting account of the wandering of Southern California's Own Coast Artillery Regiment during the year 1940. With these figures the Regiment makes its bid for the title of the most "travelingest Regiment in the United States Army."



From January 14th to the 24th, this Regiment participated in the Army-Navy joint maneuvers in the San Francisco-Monterey area covering a distance of approximately 1400 miles by truck. On this occasion the Regiment was honored by being one of the two National Guard units participating.

On August 3rd, the Regiment entrained for an extended Annual Field Training Encampment of three weeks at Chehalis, Washington. This involved a trip by train of about 3000 miles for the round trip. While in Washington the Regiment was very active in the Fourth Field Army Maneuvers and added at least 300 miles to the total of miles covered under orders.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Day of Days dawned September 16th, on a life that the citizen-soldiers never thought would come to them. Uncomplainingly and cheerfully they answered the Call of their President and Country. They left their homes, their loved ones, their jobs, their classrooms to obey the order that was to add to their already impressive total. One hundred and ninety miles brought them from their home stations in San Diego, Long Beach and San Pedro to their training camp at Ventura. Here they entered army life eager to learn and do their part to keep the American Flag the symbol of Peace on Earth.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the first part of November, the Regiment started on the voyage to Hawaii. On the 17th of November, the last of the Regiment left its native soil by way of San Pedro and added 2345 miles by the time it arrived at Ft. Shafter in Honolulu on the island of Oahu. The next stop was a short move to its new home in a kiawe grove 25 miles from Ft. Shafter. Here the men fell to with a will to clear away the tenacious kiawe or algaroba as it is called on the mainland. The men are building their own quarters amid the hardships of inadequate toilet and water facilities with little complaint. These sons of California are proud to uphold the tradition of a proud Regiment whose motto is "We Aim to Hit."

\* \* \* \* \*

The mileage covered by the end of the year totalled 7260 miles and was done in 138 days of service. This was an average of 52.6 miles for each day of service under Federal orders. If this mileage was computer at five cents per mile and given to the man, he would have \$363.00 in his pocket and could still be at home with his loved ones instead of working for a dollar a day and leading a monastic life on this barren kiawe infested, coral reef.

\* \* \* \* \*

Of course all this travel and expense is necessary to properly train the Regiment to be an efficient unit of anti-aircraft defense. However, a careful check finds that the Regiment has

spent since entering Federal service last September, the enormous total of 18 days in Infantry drill. The rest of the time has been spent in making camps and moving.

\* \* \* \* \*

When duty calls and America needs defense from enemy aircraft, this Regiment will gallantly defend with hammers, saws and squares to the last nail and stick of lumber for "We Aim to Hit."

### PEARL HARBOR AND WORLD WAR II

While the "Malakole Saga" article portrays some of the frustrations, it does not depict the high level of morale nor the outstanding record achieved by the 251st Regiment in direct competition with Regular Army troops during periods of field testing within the Hawaiian Department.

While training in Hawaii, the Regiment received its quota of draftees bringing it to full strength level of 2400 men. As the potential of an impending conflict became increasingly clear, the Regiment was ordered on full alert in the field whenever sight of the Japanese fleet was lost. Batteries of the Regiment were assigned defensive positions around the west shore of Pearl Harbor and the perimeter of Schofield Barracks, providing an anti-aircraft defense coordinated with the Navy and other army units.

However, on December 7, 1941 the day of the attack on Pearl Harbor, all carefully rehearsed procedures were of no avail -- the Regiment was at camp Malakole having just returned from a full alert. The rest is history!

During May of 1942 the Regiment (originally scheduled for the Philippines) left Hawaii for further duty in the Pacific. As part of a lonely two-ship convoy (the USS Mormac Star and the USS Normac Sea) it sailed to Viti Levu in the Fiji Islands where it established the anti-aircraft defense for a critical airfield, its heavy weapons hidden under thatched native huts.

As the tides of the war progressed, the Regiment began "island hopping" in the following sequence:

Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands	November 1943-December 1943
Bougainville, Solomon Islands	December 1943-December 1944
Luzon, Philippine Islands	December 1944-December 1945

Following the termination of the war, the 251st Regiment was deactivated on December 29, 1945 having received credit for the following campaigns in the Pacific theatre:

1. Central Pacific
2. Northern Solomons
3. Luzon (with arrowhead)
4. Philippine Liberation

### POST WORLD WAR II HISTORY

(Pending)

## REGIMENTAL REUNIONS

During the latter part of 1960, Bob Logan and Bryant Kearney (both of 1HQ.251) called several former Regimental members living in San Diego and met with them a few days before December 7 of that year to commemorate old times and the attack on Pearl Harbor; with what can only be described as a weird sense of humor, they chose a Japanese restaurant as their meeting place.

As the event began to grow larger and become more formalized, chairmen were appointed to handle the increasing work load involved in finding former guardsmen and asking them to participate. Since 1966 the Annual "Pearl Harbor Reunion" has been held at the U.S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot Officers Club in San Diego on the Saturday immediately preceding December 7 of each year.

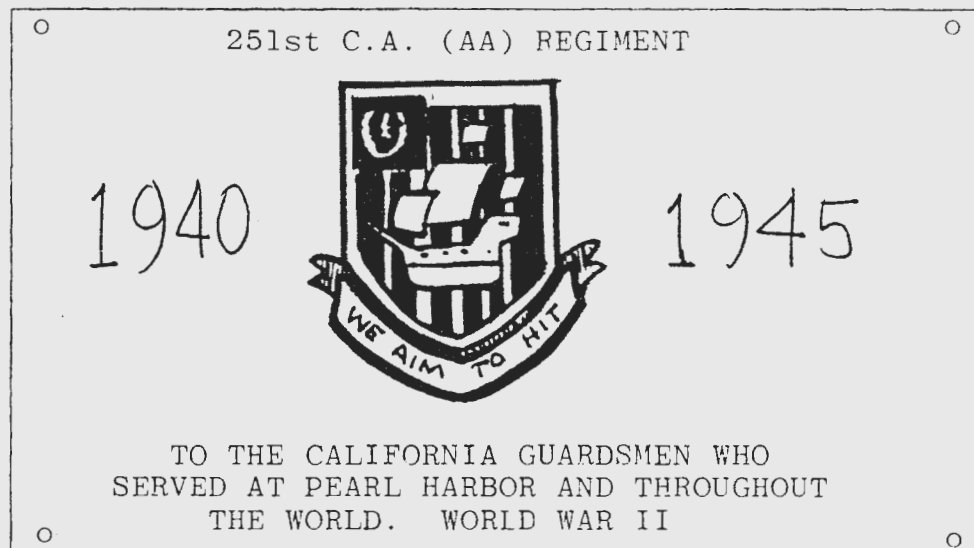
The annual reunions have evolved into a standard pattern: a noon-hour stag luncheon followed by an evening luau for former members and their wives.

The Regiment's 2nd Battalion (Long Beach) has similarly held annual reunions in their city, choosing September 16th, the day of induction, as their meeting date. Former members of the 251st are cordially invited to attend either reunion.

## MEMORIAL PLAQUES

During the 1965 Annual Regimental Reunion in San Diego, Chairman Amos Lafaver (Reg. Hq. 251) established a fund for the purpose of devising a memorial honoring the Regiment and its members for their participation in World War II. His efforts culminated during the 1977 annual reunion when Chairman Bob Macdonald (1 HQ.251) displayed a drawing of a proposed plaque to be permanently located at three appropriate sites; the proposal was approved by members attending.

In 1978, Chairman Fergus Carmody (1 HQ.251) completed arrangements for the casting of three 40 pound bronze plaques and for their installation at the San Diego National Guard Armory, the Long Beach Armory and within the Fort De Russy Pearl Harbor Memorial Building in Hawaii; these plaques each bear the following inscription:





## PATRIOTIC REFERENCES

### Pledge of Allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands. One nation under God, with liberty and justice for all.

### The Star-Spangled Banner

Oh say can you see by the dawns early light what so proudly we hailed at the twilights last gleaming, whose broad stripes and bright stars thro' the perilous fight, O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming? And the rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof thro' the night that our flag was still there. O say does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave o'er the land of free and the home of the brave?

### America, the Beautiful

Oh beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, for purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain. America! America! God shed His grace on thee. And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

### Lords Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from all evil for the Kingdom, the power and the glory is yours now and forever. Amen.