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PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION FOR THIRD DIV.

The Third Infantry Division, previously twice cited by the French Army, became the first American infantry division to receive the Presidential Unit Citation, it was announced by the War Department today.

The Third was honored for its fighting on the "forgotten front" of the war last winter -- the Colmar Pocket campaign, called by some as bloody as the Anzio Beachhead. It joined the First Marine, the Fourth Armored and the 101st Airborne Divisions as the only entire divisions to be cited by the President in this war.

Destroying three entire German divisions and badly mauling another three, the Third Division spearheaded the First French Army's attack to wipe out the troublesome enemy pocket south of Strasbourg last winter while other enemy forces were continuing their abortive Ardennes push.

Counting the attached 254th Regiment and the 765th Tank Battalion, 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion and 441st AAA Battalion, a total of 21,353 officers and men are entitled to wear the Presidential Unit Badge, largest single group ever to win the award.

OFFICIAL WAR DEPARTMENT CITATION

The Third United States Infantry Division for outstanding performance in combat during the period 28 January to 6 February 1945. Fighting through heavy snow storms, across flat land raked by 88mm, 120mm mortar, artillery, tank and machine gun fire, thru enemy-infested marshes and woods, the Third Division breached the German defense wall on the northern perimeter of the Colmar Bridgehead and drove forward to isolate Colmar from the Rhine. Crossing the Fecht River from Guemar, Alsace, by stealth at 2100 hours on 28 January 1945, assault elements of the Third Division fought their way forward against mounting enemy resistance. When the bridge constructed across the Ill River collapsed before supporting armor could arrive on the far side, two heroic battalions of the 30th Infantry Regiment held tenaciously to their small foothold across the stream against furious, tank-supported enemy attacks. Driving forward in knee-deep snow, which masked acres of densely sown mines, the men of the Third Division fought from house to house and street to street in the fortress towns of the Alsatian Plain. Under furious concentrations of support fire, Third Division assault troops crossed the Colmar Canal in rubber boats at 2100 hours on 29 January. They drove relentlessly forward to capture six towns within eight hours, inflict 500 casualties on the enemy during the day, and capture large quantities of booty. Troops of the Third Infantry Division slashed through to the Rhone-Rhine Canal, cutting off the garrison at Colmar and rendering the fall of the city inevitable. Then, shifting the direction of attack, the Division moved south between the Rhone-Rhine Canal and the Rhine toward Neuf Brisach and the Brisach Bridge. Simultaneously, Neuf Brisach was attacked from the west side of the Rhone-Rhine Canal and the walls scaled by ladder and through the combination of these maneuvers the fortress was captured. In one of the hardest fought and bloodiest campaigns of the war, the Third Division annihilated three enemy divisions, mauled three more, captured over 4,000 prisoners and inflicted a total of approximately 7,500 casualties on the enemy.