

# 654

THE RED ARROW IN WORLD WAR II

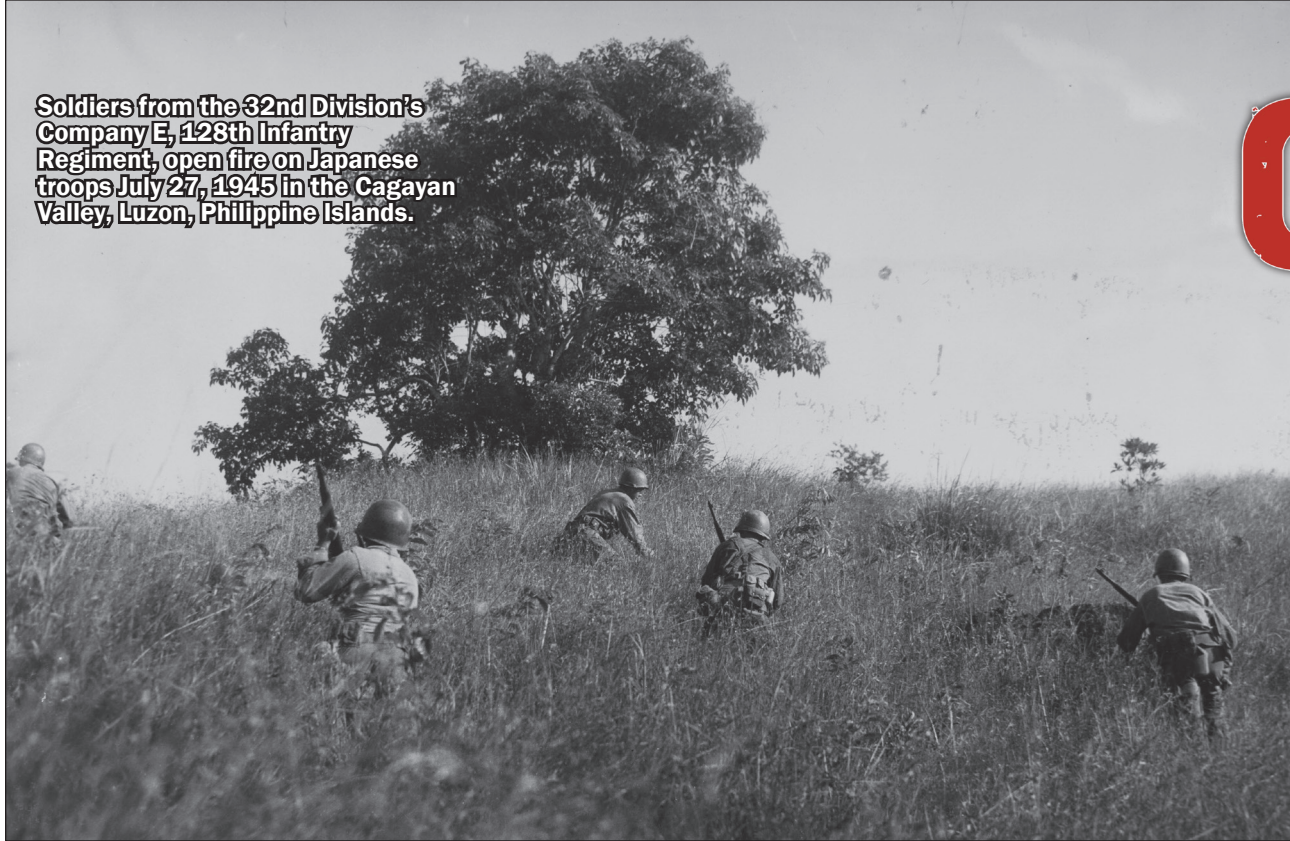




**FRONT COVER:**  
Soldiers from the 32nd Division's Company G, 2nd Battalion, 128th Infantry fire their rifles into a Japanese dugout in the Buna, New Guinea area prior to entering and inspecting the position Jan. 3, 1943.

**BACK COVER:**  
A column of 32nd Division Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment moving along a trail near Gabumi, New Guinea Feb. 13, 1944. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos

Soldiers from the 32nd Division's Company E, 128th Infantry Regiment, open fire on Japanese troops July 27, 1945 in the Cagayan Valley, Luzon, Philippine Islands.



# 654

## THE RED ARROW IN WORLD WAR II

*To commemorate the end of World War II 75 years ago, the Wisconsin National Guard is recounting the role of the 32nd Division — consisting of the Wisconsin National Guard and much of the Michigan National Guard — as it spent more days in combat than any other American unit against a determined enemy and unforgiving terrain.*

**Wisconsin National Guard  
Public Affairs Office**



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# Foreword

This product is but a snapshot of a crucial moment in time, involving the thousands of men who made up the 32nd Division — Wisconsinites and Michiganders at first, but increasingly men from across the nation as the cost of war took its inevitable toll.

Originally, our plans for “654: The Red Arrow in World War II” were somewhat grand. Not as grand as the 90-minute documentary we produced to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 32nd Division in 2017 and 2018 — that kind of time was simply not available to us as we observed the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. However, we did envision a series of short historical videos that told the story of the Red Arrow from the Louisiana Maneuvers to the inhospitable jungles of New Guinea, facing a determined and entrenched Japanese foe in New Guinea and the Philippine Islands.

But we encountered an unexpected

foe of our own — COVID-19. Time and resources we had planned to use to tell the story of how the 32nd Division spent more days in combat during World War II — 654 days officially, and a few more unofficially — than any other Army division now were redirected to tell the story of the Wisconsin National Guard’s unprecedented time on State Active Duty as part of Wisconsin’s pandemic response.

As the important gave way to the immediate, we arrived on a new course of action — convert the scripts for our planned video projects into a series of articles, augmented with U.S. Army Signal Corps photos of the 32nd Division obtained from the National

Archives. We launched this series on Sept. 2 — the 75th anniversary of Japan signing the Instrument of Surrender, formally ending World War II.

This product is a variation of that effort, telling the Red Arrow’s South Pacific story in magazine format. It is woefully incomplete — it is nearly impossible to offer a complete telling of the experiences of thousands of Soldiers, some who died during the war and others who survived to live out their years after the war. We offer quick, broad strokes in an attempt to retell the Red Arrow’s odyssey that begins with a nation reluctant to enter another global conflict and ends with that nation having become

a global superpower half a decade later.

We wanted to emphasize one aspect of this odyssey that nearly shattered the Red Arrow, and that is the bloody story of the Buna campaign. We do not suggest that the 32nd Division was treated unfairly by Gen. Douglas MacArthur or his staff, but we contend it is undeniable that the Red Arrow was placed in an unwinnable situation — insufficiently trained for jungle warfare, lacking important equipment and supplies, battling tropical diseases and often impassable terrain, and following orders based on faulty intelligence gathering — and through sheer grit and sacrifice found a way to defeat an enemy who maximized every available advantage conditions allowed.

The Red Arrow would face similar challenges in Saidor, Aitape, Leyte and the Villa Verde Trail — and persevere.

That’s why this story needs to be told, and remembered.



**Maj. Joe Trovato:** Concept

**Maj. Brian Faltinson:** Historical research, editor

**Sgt. Alex Baum:** Imagery research

**Vaughn R. Larson:** Research, production, editor



# The end, and a beginning

The walkie-talkie said, “The war’s over.”

The grimy sergeant from A Company flicked the butterfly on the mike and said, “Yeah, all over these damned mountains.”

It was the morning of Aug. 15, 1945. For the book, it was the 32nd Division’s 654th — and last — day of combat in World War II. But not for the men of A Company. One dough was dead and two were wounded. The platoon was cut off. Back through the mountains at B Company, 11 miles by trail, 1st Lt. Troy Ricks, one-time baseball star from Boonesville, Miss., said, somewhat grimly, “There’s no celebrating here. This is the 32nd. We always fight after campaigns are over,” which made him somewhat of a prophet.

Less than 18 hours later, A Company was hit by another banzai. Another dough was killed and seven were wounded.

Back at the divisional public-relations office, Capt. William A. Fleischer, of New York City, said,



**Soldiers from the 32nd “Red Arrow” Division’s 127th Infantry Regiment gather around a sign detailing the division’s battle campaigns, Oct. 18, 1945. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo**





**Soldiers from the 32nd Infantry Division's 126th Infantry Regiment rush from Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI) boats during the invasion of Saidor, New Guinea, Jan. 2, 1944. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo**

"That's the 32nd — first to start fighting, last to finish."  
(From "The Red Arrow Pierced Every Line" in the Nov. 10, 1945 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*)

Seventy-five years ago, on Sept. 2, 1945, representatives of the Japanese Empire signed a document called the Instrument of Surrender, formally ending World War II.

The fighting in the South Pacific during World War II is often overshadowed by the fighting in Europe, and in truth the United States directed more of its wartime resources toward defeating the Third Reich. The 32nd "Red Arrow" Division, which earned its name fighting against Germany in World War I, was originally slated to return to Europe before a late decision by the War Department sent it to defend Australia against the Japanese military.

The 32nd Division, made of men from the Wisconsin and Michigan National Guard, was the first U.S. Army division to launch an offensive operation against the Japanese, and learned the hard way the hard lessons of an insufficiently trained, under-supplied unit waging jungle warfare against an entrenched enemy determined not to surrender. It would also be the first to be airborne into combat, to make a beach landing and to supply multiple battalions in combat by airdrop.

The Red Arrow participated in the Papuan campaign (September 1942-January 1943), which consisted of the battles for Buna-Gona and Sananda; the Western New Guinea campaign (January-November 1944), which included the battles for Saidor, Aitape, Biak and Morotai; the Southern Philippines campaign (November 1944-January 1945), centered on Leyte; and the Luzon campaign (January-May 1945) featuring the Villa Verde Trail. The division would also participate in the post-war occupation of Japan from September 1945-February 1946. During the course of the war it would suffer 1,613 killed in action, 5,627 wounded, 27 missing in action, and one prisoner of war. †





# The Red Arrow maneuvers toward war

Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the French commander of allied forces during World War I, offered a grim prediction upon hearing the terms of the Treaty of Versailles that officially ended the first world war: “This is not peace. It is an armistice for 20 years.”

Many factors combined to create the environment that led to the Second World War. Germany resented bearing full responsibility for war reparations, an economic hardship further aggravated by the Great Depression. Japan became more militaristic, creating unrest in Manchuria in the early 1930s and outright war with China in 1937. A significant defeat in a battle against Mongolian and Soviet forces in 1939 led Japan to focus its imperial ambitions southward. The Philippines, then a U.S. commonwealth, were of vital strategic value to Japan’s South Pacific expansion.

The United States returned to its longstanding preference for isolationism after the end of World War I, neither ratifying the Treaty of Versailles nor joining the League of Nations. The desire to avoid wars overseas, combined with a devastating economic depression, resulted in an American military unprepared for war even as a resurgent Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and conquered France in 1940.

After the fall of France,



**Two 32nd Division Soldiers board a southbound train in October 1940. The Wisconsin National Guard had been called to active duty for several months of training in the event the United States would enter World War II.**

President Franklin Roosevelt called the National Guard to active duty in October 1940 to bolster the Army’s strength. The 32nd Division — formed in 1917 from the entire Wisconsin National Guard and much of the Michigan National Guard — traveled to Louisiana to train for potential combat against a mechanized European enemy. The 3rd and 4th Army Maneuvers, conducted in Louisiana and the



Carolinas, involved up to 400,000 troops in 1941, including one Col. Dwight Eisenhower. The division's 128th Regimental Combat Team — composed for the maneuvers with elements from the 126th, 127th and 128th Infantry regiments, 120th Field Artillery, 107th Engineer Battalion, 107th Medical Regiment and others — received a letter of commendation for its performance during the Carolina Maneuvers in November 1941.

Maj. Gen. Irving Fish commanded the 32nd Division during the maneuvers. He joined the Wisconsin National Guard in 1903 and served during the Mexican Border Crisis as well as World War I and other military campaigns. But in 1942 Fish was transferred to other assignments due to his age.



**MAJ. GEN.  
IRVING FISH**

By that time, the United States had already declared war on Japan following the attack on Pearl Harbor as well as Japan's invasion of the Philippines. Gen. Douglas MacArthur was stationed in the Philippines as commander of U.S. Army forces in the Far East when Japan invaded on Dec. 8, 1941. He and his



**Left, a platoon from the 32nd Division's Company A, 107th Engineers, crossing a 72-foot bridge weighing up to 15 tons at Camp Livingston, La., May 23, 1941. The platoon erected the bridge in 80 minutes under the direction of Capt. Loren Jenkins.**

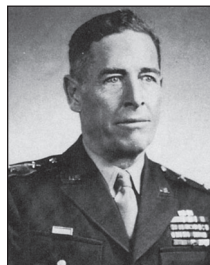
**At right, engineers from the 32nd Division's Company A, 107th Engineers pull a steel truss for a 72-foot bridge weighing up to 15 tons at Camp Livingston, La., May 23, 1941. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**





family would be extracted to Australia the following March. However, the Wisconsin National Guard's 32nd Tank Company in Janesville had separated from the division and deployed to the Philippines as Company A, 192nd Tank Battalion. They, with the remaining American and Philippine troops, would surrender to the Japanese after MacArthur's departure and endure the horrific Bataan Death March.

Still, the Red Arrow had trained for Europe and was expecting to fight the Germans once again. Roosevelt himself had said that to defeat Japan, the United



**MAJ. GEN.  
EDWIN HARDING**

States had to defeat Germany. Maj. Gen. Edwin Harding took command of the 32nd Division in February 1942. An instructor at Fort Benning, Georgia in the 1920s and 1930s, Harding was part of a group who emphasized new infantry tactics to avoid the massive casualties that resulted from frontal assaults into fortified enemy positions.

Around this time the Army revised its division structure, going from four to three infantry regiments. The Michigan National Guard's 125th Infantry

States had to defeat Germany.

Maj. Gen. Edwin Harding took command of the 32nd Division in February 1942. An instructor at Fort Benning, Georgia in the 1920s and 1930s, Harding was part of a group who



**32nd Division Communications School, radio section, taking radio telegraph code practice at Camp Livingston, La., May 23, 1941. Instructors standing at tables, left to right: Staff Sgt. Ralph Sanger, Tech. Sgt. Don Eddy, and Staff Sgt. George Wassell. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**

Regiment was no longer part of the Red Arrow. Also around this time, military leaders from the United States and Britain agreed that the U.S. would have the main responsibility for conducting military operations in the entire Pacific

theater. The threat to Australia increased significantly when Japan landed forces on nearby New Guinea, and the U.S. Army selected the 32nd and 41st divisions to support I Corps and assist two Australian divisions in driving the

Japanese back.

The Red Arrow was at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, preparing to head over to Europe — in fact, its 107th Engineer Battalion was already en route to Ireland — when on March 25, 1942 it learned it had three weeks to arrive in San Francisco to deploy to Australia. The division was still short 1,800 men despite gaining 3,000 Soldiers fresh from basic training. It was also short on equipment, and had little training on what new equipment it did receive. Most importantly, the division had received no jungle warfare training. But MacArthur — now commander in chief of the Southwest Pacific Area — and the United States had no other options.

The 32nd Division departed San Francisco on April 22 and arrived at Port Adelaide, Australia on May 14. Valuable training time was diverted to building barracks, mess halls and other required facilities. Several weeks later the division moved halfway across the continent to another training camp near Brisbane. At this point, the Red Arrow had been on the move for five of the seven months the United States had been at war.

The Red Arrow renamed their new location Camp Cable after Cpl. Gerald Cable of Service Company, 126th Infantry, who was killed when his transport was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine during the move from





**Servicing bayonets is one of the many jobs done at Camp Cable near Brisbane, Australia by the 32nd Division's 37th Ordnance Company, Aug. 23, 1942. The original caption describes the location as Camp Plunkett, Tambourine, Australia. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**

Adelaide to Brisbane. Cable was the division's first Soldier killed by enemy action in World War II.

The Red Arrow's overall readiness was not lost on Lt. Gen. Robert Eichelberger, I Corps commander, or on MacArthur.

"I told MacArthur and [his] chief of staff that I thought the 32nd Division was not sufficiently trained to meet the Japanese veterans on equal terms," Eichelberger wrote in his book *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo*. He wrote that division leaders were very aware of these deficiencies. However, the Japanese — making their way from Buna, New Guinea toward Port Moresby, from where they could launch attacks against Australia — were not inclined to give the Americans the time needed to prepare for the fight.

MacArthur toured the 32nd Division training area in September, and spoke to their officers.

"The last time I saw your outfit was on the battlefield in France," MacArthur said. "It had just completed one of the finest actions that the World War saw. I wasn't a member of it, but I took a peculiar pride in it because at that time half of it came from my beloved section of the country. ... I have every confidence that in this war, in the fight in which we are going to be very shortly engaged, you will carry out in full the old traditions."



The Red Arrow would neither see nor hear MacArthur offer similar encouragement during their inaugural campaign.

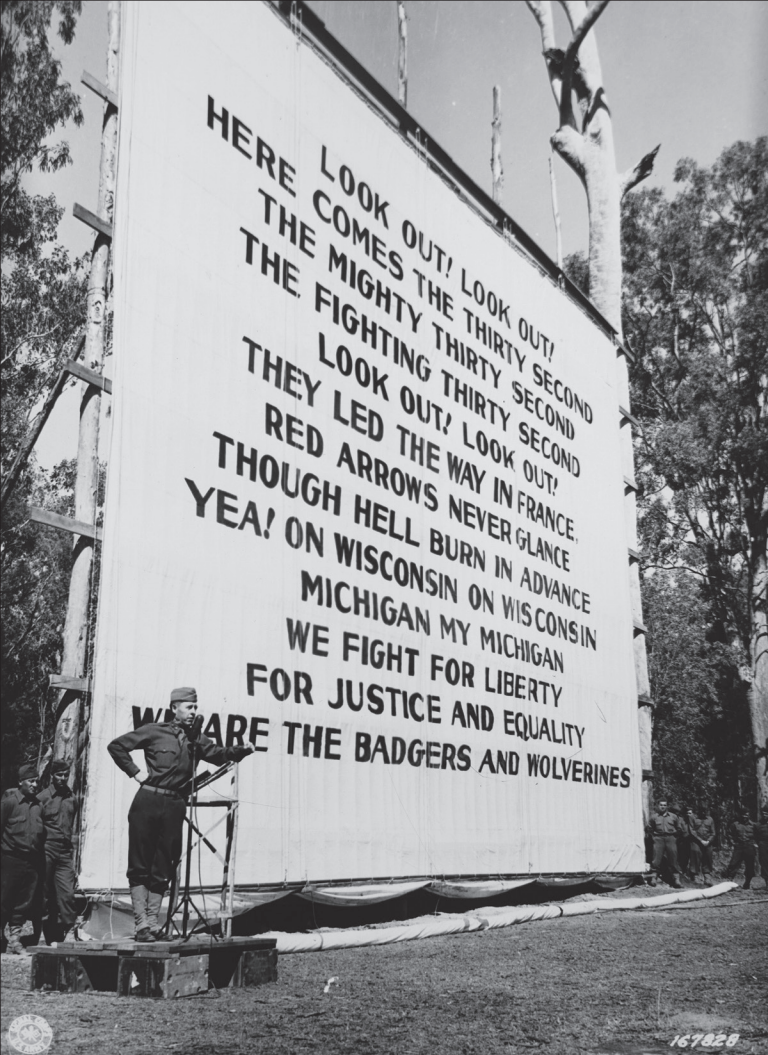
On Sept. 7, Eichelberger and Harding addressed the entire division.

"The thing to keep constantly before us — the thing we want to aspire to — is that this outfit be recognized as an outfit of killers," Harding told his men. "Men who fight to the finish, men who endeavor by all precautions and all preparations in training to preserve their own lives and take away as many of those of the enemy as we can."

Eichelberger told the 32nd Division that they would be in action before long.

**32nd Division Soldiers Sgt. Richard Bowerstock of Stevens Point, Wis., and Sgt. Chester Van Ruth of Nekoosa, Wis., demonstrate disarming an enemy combatant of his rifle during a Nov. 10, 1942 training most likely at Camp Cable.**





**654:** The Red Arrow in WWII

**Maj. Gen. Edwin Harding, 32nd Division commander, delivers a speech to his troops on the division's accomplishments and traditions Sept. 17, 1942 at Camp Cable near Brisbane, Australia.**

Less than a week later, MacArthur ordered the Red Arrow to Papua New Guinea, where they would take part in the first U.S. ground offensive against the Japanese. Five days later, a regimental combat team built around the 126th Infantry flew from Brisbane, Australia to Port Moresby, New Guinea — the first major airlift of combat troops in the war.



**Staff Sgt. Emil Raninen of Detroit and Cpl. Russell Holler of Pontiac, Mich., with a half-ton emergency repair truck from the 32nd "Red Arrow" Division's 37th Ordnance mobile ordnance repair unit at Camp Plunkett near Tambourine in Queensland, Australia Aug. 23, 1942. The truck is equipped to service weapons ranging from handguns to howitzers. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**

A week later they were joined by a regimental combat team built around the 128th Infantry.

The 32nd Division's 654 days in

combat during World War II — more than any other division in the war — would begin with the campaign to drive the Japanese out of Buna. †



# Buna, the baptism of blood

The 32nd “Red Arrow” Division, consisting of the Wisconsin National Guard and much of the Michigan National Guard, had spent much of 1941 training for war in Europe. The division spent a good portion of 1942 travelling — across the United States, across the Pacific, and across Australia — when it was unexpectedly diverted to fight the Japanese who had reached New Guinea on their advance toward Australia.

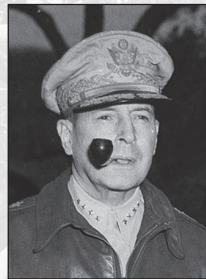
The 32nd Division was led by

**Two Soldiers from the 32nd “Red Arrow” Division’s 128th Infantry Regiment inspect a captured Japanese “pillbox,” or fighting position — for booby traps or land mines Dec. 21, 1942 at Cape Endaiadere, Papua New Guinea. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**

Maj. Gen. Edwin Harding, a former infantry instructor at Fort Benning, Georgia who literally wrote the book on achieving military

objectives without resorting to costly frontal assaults.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur, commander in chief of the Southwest Pacific Area, had previously experienced



**GEN. DOUGLAS MACARTHUR**

the seemingly unstoppable Japanese advance in the Philippines, and now was tasked with defeating the Japanese even as much of the U.S. military’s resources were directed to the war in Europe.



Image courtesy Google Maps



MacArthur was aware the two American divisions he had — the 32nd and the 41st — were insufficiently trained, equipped and manned. He also lacked other military equipment and assets he desired to prosecute a military campaign against the Japanese. But with the Japanese landing on Buna on the northern coast of Papua New Guinea and Milne Bay on the southeast tip in June and advancing down the Kokoda Trail toward Port Moresby, MacArthur had no more time to offer the Red Arrow, and no sympathy for their hardship.

Led by Company E, 126th Infantry Regiment on Sept. 15, 1942, the 32nd Division — minus the 127th Infantry Regiment — began a two-week move by air and sea to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. For some Red Arrow Soldiers, the move came so swiftly that the camouflage dye on their fatigues was still wet when they boarded the aircraft. While Australian soldiers pushed the Japanese back up the Kokoda Trail, MacArthur and Gen. Sir Thomas Blamey — commander in chief of the Australian military forces, and commander of Allied land forces under MacArthur — decided the 32nd Division should envelop the Japanese to the east of the trail and engage them at Buna.

The majority of the 32nd Division in New Guinea moved north by air — the first such large-scale troop movement by air for the U.S. Army. The 2nd Battalion,



**Above, jungled ridges at the gap in the Owen Stanley Mountains, New Guinea.** U.S. Army Center of Military History photo

126th Infantry, however, was tasked with taking the Kapa Kapa Trail across the Owen Stanley mountain range — a torturous trek that would leave them gaunt, weakened, hungry yet sickened with dysentery, resembling the specters that New Guinea natives claimed haunted the “Ghost Mountain.”

“It was the eeriest place I ever saw,” Lt. Paul Lutjens later wrote in his diary.

“The trees were covered with moss a half a foot thick. We would walk along a hogback, straddling the trail, with a sheer drop of thousands of feet two feet on



**The Japanese advanced south toward Port Moresby along the Kokoda Trail (white). The 32nd Division’s 126th Infantry Regiment trekked over the Owen Stanley Mountains along the Kapa Kapa Trail (red).** Image courtesy Google Maps

either side of us. We kept hearing water running somewhere, but we couldn’t find any. We could thrust a stick six feet down in the spongy stuff we were

walking on without hitting anything real solid. It was ungodly cold. There wasn’t a sign of life. Not a bird. Not a fly. Not a sound. It was the strangest feeling I





**At right, Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment adjust their clothing and equipment after disembarking a transport plane which brought them from Port Moresby to the Dubadura air strip eight miles south of Buna, Papua New Guinea Dec. 15, 1942. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**

ever had. If we stopped, we froze. If we moved, we sweated.”

Ironically, as the 2nd Battalion made its torturous trek, MacArthur learned that airstrips could be built north of the Owen Stanley mountains. The remainder of the 126th Regiment as well as the 128th Regiment took less than an hour to fly over terrain that took the 2nd Battalion a harrowing 42 days on foot.

The very terrain of Papua New Guinea proved a formidable challenge in its own right. Teeming with biting insects, venomous snakes and crocodiles, the landscape consisted of swamps, swollen rivers, deep mud, steep climbs, dense foliage and tropical diseases that sapped Red Arrow Soldiers of their health and strength.

The Japanese army was also tormented by the terrain, hungry and weak from



**A 32nd Division Soldier searches this innocent-looking pile of coconuts, coconut sprouts and logs — one of many captured Japanese “pillboxes,” or fighting positions — for enemy stragglers Dec. 21, 1942 at Cape Endaiadere, Papua New Guinea.**

illness. But they were far from the pitiful band of starving soldiers described by American intelligence reports — reports MacArthur relied on for his battle plans. The Japanese had reinforced their troops in the Gona/Buna area of New Guinea, and had expertly built fighting positions that took full advantage of the terrain to funnel advancing troops into avenues of destruction. Their complex network



**Soldiers from the 32nd Division's Headquarters Company, 128th Infantry Regiment, unload food carried by rowboat along Eroro Creek to a jungle path where it will be transported about half a mile to Eroro Mission Nov. 13, 1942.**



of fortified and camouflaged positions were complemented by snipers hiding high up in trees. Their concealment was so effective that American surveillance determined the area to be lightly defended.

At this stage of the war in the South Pacific, American military resources were relatively scarce. The Navy had its hands full at Guadalcanal, and could not accommodate MacArthur's request for naval guns or landing ships. The Army Air Corps assured MacArthur that aerial bombardment would be more effective than artillery, though the jungle canopy

and Japanese camouflage would prove that boast to be hollow.

"I want to bring back as many of the Red Arrow lads with me as I can," Harding wrote his wife. "That ambition won't be furthered if we move before we are good and ready to go."

But ready or not, the Red Arrow was the first U.S. division to initiate an offensive action against the Japanese army. That first contact was a stinging rebuke. Low on supplies due to an earlier Japanese air raid, little artillery support, an entire regiment loaned



**Col. John J. Carew, Capt. Michael DeFinna and 2nd Lt. James D. Doughty inspect a jungle trail leading to Embogu, New Guinea to see if it can be converted to a Jeep trail Nov. 14, 1942. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**



**New Guinea natives carry a wounded 32nd Division Soldier away from the front lines near the village of Simeni Nov. 25, 1942 during the Buna campaign.**





to the Australians and operating on faulty intelligence — MacArthur still believed the 32nd was contending with a wretched infirmity of Japanese soldiers — the division learned the first of many tough lessons.

MacArthur, however, thought the lesson was that the Red Arrow was not fighting hard enough.

“Take Buna today at all costs,” he told Harding in a merciless Nov. 22 order.

Over the course of the next several days, augmented with the “Ghost Mountain Boys” of the 2nd Battalion, 126th Infantry, the Red Arrow slowly advanced on the Japanese, paying a heavy price for each foot of ground gained. But what gains the Red Arrow achieved were not enough for MacArthur, who sent Lt. General Robert Eichelberger to replace Harding on Nov. 30.

“Take Buna or don’t come back alive,” MacArthur told Eichelberger.

Harding was relieved of command of the Red Arrow on Dec. 2, 1942. Many of the supplies and equipment Harding had requested and done without in New Guinea, as well as the 127th

**Col. Herbert A. Smith, commander of the 32nd Division’s 2nd Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, and some of his Soldiers wade across the Sarau River as they make their way from Biamu to Embogo, New Guinea Nov. 15, 1942. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo**





**Above, Capt. Jack Martin of Shamrock, Texas, Capt. Emil Khail of Two Rivers, Wis., Col. Kelsie Miller of Oklahoma City, Okla., and Col. Alex McNab — of the 32nd Division's 3rd Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment — map out plans for moving troops at Warisota Village near Buna, New Guinea Nov. 15, 1942. At right, they cross a footbridge with Cpl. William Mason at Warisota Plantation. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**



**Soldiers from the 32nd “Red Arrow” Division’s Company M, 3rd Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, cross a footbridge between Borio and Dobudura, New Guinea Nov. 15, 1942.**

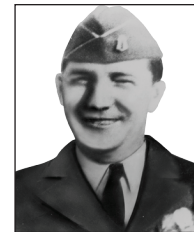
Infantry Regiment, began to arrive after Eichelberger took command. Red Arrow Soldiers enjoyed their first hot meal in weeks. As fortunes were improving for the Red Arrow, Japanese forces at Buna were running low on supplies and morale. Still, the enemy had the advantage of superior fighting positions built to withstand mortar and artillery attacks — and as their situation became more desperate, suicide squads were organized to attack the Red Arrow.

The 32nd Division — after weeks

of on-the-job training in jungle warfare — was beginning to show the results MacArthur demanded, but at considerable cost. The “Ghost Mountain Boys” battalion had nearly 900 Soldiers when it crossed the Owen Stanley mountains, but in the push to take Buna now numbered fewer than 300. As the grim fighting continued at Buna, the Australians took Gona on Dec. 9. A week later, troops from the 127th Infantry Regiment took Buna Village, and two days after that Soldiers from the



**Soldiers from the 32nd Division's Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, comb a section of Buna Mission, Papua New Guinea previously held by Japanese forces Jan. 3, 1943. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo**



**1ST SGT.  
ELMER BURR**



**SGT. KENNETH  
GRUENNERT**

**Medal of Honor recipients  
Dec. 24, 1942**

128th Infantry Regiment took Coconut Grove.

But the Japanese continued to whittle down the Red Arrow Soldiers as they pressed forward, driven by MacArthur's order to take Buna or die trying. Even so, every Red Arrow approach was repulsed by heavy machine gun and sniper fire. Two Soldiers from the 127th would posthumously receive Medals of Honor for their actions on Christmas Eve, 1942 — 1st Sgt. Elmer Burr, who fell on a hand grenade to save the life of his captain, and Sgt. Kenneth Gruennert, who used hand grenades to clear out

two Japanese fighting positions before a sniper killed him. These were the first Medals of Honor awarded to the Red Arrow in World War II.

By Jan. 2, 1943, Buna had fallen to the Americans and the Australians. Soldiers from the 127th took part in capturing Sanananda on Jan. 22. The Red Arrow, and American troops, had won their first ground campaign against the Japanese in the South Pacific.

Writing later about this part of the war, Eichelberger acknowledged that the Red Arrow did the best it could given its considerable disadvantages.

"Any historian will be hard put to discover in this war a division which earned, and deserved, so many citations and decorations for individual bravery," Eichelberger wrote.

When MacArthur changed his tactics to bypass fortified enemy positions — instead focusing on attacking Japanese supply chains to weaken their ability to fight — he essentially conceded that Harding's plan would have taken Buna with far fewer casualties.

"No more Bunas," MacArthur would later say.

The first four months of combat were

not kind to the Red Arrow. By the end of the Buna campaign, nearly 9,700 of the approximately 11,000 Red Arrow infantry Soldiers were casualties. Of those, 7,125 were due to illness, nearly 1,700 were wounded, and 690 killed. The division would return to Camp Cable, Australia to recover, train, gain new Soldiers and prepare for a return to New Guinea, beginning with Saidor.

The Red Arrow Division would spend 654 days in combat in the South Pacific — more than any other division during World War II. Bloody Buna was only the beginning. †





Chaplain Walter T. Hanley, from the 153rd Station Hospital, conducts Catholic funeral services for Pfc. Joseph Ambrose of Wayland, Mich., Oct. 30, 1942. Ambrose, a member of the 32nd Division's Company H, 126th Infantry Regiment, was one of three Soldiers killed by an enemy air raid Oct. 29. The burial took place at a military cemetery 12 miles from Port Moresby, New Guinea. Members of his unit served as pallbearers and rifle squad. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos



Above, pallbearers carry the casket of Pfc. Joseph Ambrose to his burial site.

Below, Chaplain Theo. Barron conducts the Protestant services for Pvt. Oliver Winscot of Denison, Iowa and Pvt. Vernon A.C. Voss, also members of Company H, 126th Infantry Regiment, killed in an enemy air raid Oct. 29, 1942. Members of their unit served as pallbearers and rifle squad.







Top and center left, Lt. Gen. Robert Eichelberger, I Army Corps commander, and Brig. Gen. Frayne Baker, acting 32nd Division commander, en route to review "Red Arrow" Soldiers at Camp Cable, Australia on Nov. 4, 1942. Lower left, Baker speaks to a platoon of bayonet drill instructors Nov. 14, 1942 at Camp Cable.

At left and above, 32nd Division Soldiers Sgt. Richard Bowerstock of Stevens Point, Wis., and Sgt. Chester Van Ruth of Nekoosa, Wis., demonstrate bayonet tactics suitable for jungle warfare during a Nov. 10, 1942 training at Camp Cable. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos





Above, Capt. Omer Crocker, commander of the 32nd Division's Cannon Company, 128th Infantry Regiment, helps his men across a foot bridge over Eroro Creek near Buna Mission, New Guinea en route to Embogu Nov. 14, 1942. At right, Cannon Company Soldiers move along a jungle trail to Embogu, New Guinea Nov. 14, 1942. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos



Above, artillerymen from the Australian Mountain Battery and a battery from the 32nd Division dismantle a 25-lb. mountain howitzer at Embogu, New Guinea Nov. 15, 1942 prior to shipment by barge to Cape Sudest, New Guinea. The barge, captured from the Japanese, was sunk the following night.





At left, 32nd Division Soldiers boarding a U.S. Army transport in Australia Nov. 15, 1942.

Above, 127th Infantry Regiment Soldiers adjust their clothing and equipment after disembarking a transport plane which brought them from Port Moresby to the Dubadura air strip eight miles south of Buna, Papua New Guinea Dec. 15, 1942.

At right, Cpl. Ben Van Dyke of Kalamazoo, Mich., looks on as Pfc. Daniel Read of Pittsford, Mich., opens a can of C-Rations before the Company L, 3rd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment Soldiers board a plane near Port Moresby heading to Dubadura Dec. 12, 1942.

U.S. Army Signal Corps photos







Above, Capt. Emil Khail of Two Rivers, Wis., with members of the 32nd Division's 3rd Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment Nov. 15, 1942 examine the equipment of three Japanese soldiers killed by Red Arrow Soldiers in the village of Dubadura, New Guinea during the Buna campaign.

At right, a Papuan native draws a diagram at the village of Simeni, New Guinea, depicting the position of Japanese forces to Cpl. William Mason of Task Force Buna headquarters; Col. Kelsie Miller of 3rd Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment; Capt. John Roworth, division intelligence officer, and Capt. Khail, regimental intelligence officer, on Nov. 15, 1942.

U.S. Army Signal Corps photos







**Above, 32nd Infantry Division Soldiers Pvt. Lawrence Leishman of Peoria, Ill., Cpl. Rodney Reimer of Manitowoc, Wis., and Pvt. Martin Cenueli of Cumberland, Wis., man an M1919 .30-caliber Browning machine gun emplacement by the Embogo River near Buna, New Guinea Nov. 15, 1942. At left, Soldiers from Company I, 3rd Battalion, 128th Infantry cross a footbridge between Warisota Plantation and Borio, New Guinea Nov. 15. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**





**Above, 1st Lt. Paul Maurer, of the 32nd Division dental corps, treats wounded Soldiers near Hariko. New Guinea Nov. 15, 1942 during the Buna campaign. Maurer was pressed into service due to the shortage of medical men. At right, Japanese aircraft bombed and strafed this village, causing several casualties, during the 32nd Division's Buna campaign Nov. 22, 1942. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**







**Members of the 32nd Division's Company L, 3rd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment, loading ammunition onto a DC-3 at Ward's Drome, six miles southeast of Port Moresby, New Guinea Dec. 12, 1942. The 127th is about to depart for Dubadura, New Guinea to join their fellow Red Arrow troops involved in the Buna campaign.**



**Cpl. Robert Piel of Milwaukee, left, and Pfc. Paul Slompon of Clintonville, Wis., members of the 32nd Division's 3rd Battalion, 127th Infantry, display war trophies in front of a Japanese bunker at Buna Village, Papua New Guinea.**



**Soldiers from the 32nd Division's 3rd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment, near a Japanese bunker at Buna Village, Papua New Guinea, Dec. 15, 1942.**



**A Japanese "pillbox," or fighting position, captured at Buna Village, Papua New Guinea by Soldiers from the 32nd Division Dec. 15, 1942. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**





**Chaplain Joseph Whelan of Detroit, Mich., performs a funeral ceremony for a 32nd Division Soldier killed in New Guinea Dec. 21, 1942 at Camp Andaiadere, New Guinea. Sgt. John Price of Reese, Mich., a Soldier with the 128th Infantry Regiment, is also pictured.**



**Wounded men at the 32nd Division's 4th Portable Hospital near Buna Village, New Guinea, wait to be evacuated to Dobodura Dec. 31, 1942. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**





**Above, Soldiers from Service Company, 127th Infantry Regiment, ferry supplies by boat on the Girau River in the Buna area of Papua New Guinea Dec. 31, 1942.**

**At right, Soldiers from the 32nd Division's Heavy Weapons Company of the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment fire a 37-mm gun at enemy positions at Buna Mission Point Jan. 1, 1943. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**





At left, Cpl. Addison Murdere on the telephone at the forward command post for the 32nd Division's Company E, 127th Infantry Regiment directly adjacent to the jungle occupied by Japanese forces Jan. 21, 1943 in Papua, New Guinea.

Above, The outpost of the 32nd Division's 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment on Buna Island between Buna Village and Buna Mission, Jan. 1, 1943. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos





**During their six-week convalescent period following hospitalization for malaria, 32nd Division members of Rest Camp's 3rd Casual**

**Company drill on the beach at Point Fingal, New South Wales, Australia April 29, 1943. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**



**Lt. Gen. Robert Eichelberger observes 32nd Division 105-mm howitzer training at Camp Cable in Queensland, Australia May 21, 1943.**





**Above, A military funeral for the 32nd Division's Lt. Col. Simon Warmanhoven of Grand Rapids, Mich., the division surgeon, at the USAFIA military cemetery in Australia May 8, 1943.**



**Right, New Guinea natives unload new white crosses to be used at the Buna Mission Cemetery for American forces at Buna Mission, New Guinea May 11, 1943. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**



**32nd Division Soldiers march down Queen Street in Brisbane, Australia during the Allied Flag Day parade June 14, 1943.**





**Maj. Gen. William Gill, 32nd Division commander, presents the Distinguished Service Cross to Maj. Chester Beaver of Yankton, South Dakota**

**during a July 23, 1943 ceremony at Camp Cable, Australia. Beaver was recognized for actions during the attack on Buna Village, Papua New Guinea.**



**First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt gets a close look at a 32nd "Red Arrow" Division tank destroyer during a Sept. 9, 1943 visit to Camp Cable in Queensland, Australia. With Mrs. Roosevelt are Lt. Col. Hugh Furming, commander of the 632nd Tank Destroyer Battalion, and Lt. Col. Chester Beaver, commander of the 126th Infantry Regiment. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo by Pfc. Gilbert Isaacs**





**2nd Lt. Charlotte Cyzak of Kenosha, Wis., left, a member of the Army Nurse Corps with the 172nd Station Hospital, is supported by two friends during an Oct. 18, 1943 funeral service for her brother, Sgt. Thad Cyzak of the 32nd Division's Company B, 127th Infantry Regiment. The service was held at U.S. Armed Forces Ipswich, Australia Cemetery. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo by Tech. 4 Jack Pfeiffer**





Lord Ford Gowrie, the governor general of Australia, Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, commander of the U.S. 6th Army, and Maj. Gen. William Gill, commander of the 32nd "Red Arrow" Division, inspect an unarmed combat demonstration in Australia May 12, 1943. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo

# The Red Arrow returns to the fight

After four grueling months, the 32nd "Red Arrow" Division had driven the Japanese from Buna in Papua New Guinea. They learned jungle warfare the hard way, and at great cost. In addition to the dead and wounded, nearly 8,000 Red Arrow Soldiers suffered from malaria. The men needed to be healed in

body and spirit to continue the fight.

By April of 1943 the entire division had returned to Australia. There the Red Arrow would recuperate, integrate replacement Soldiers into their ranks, and incorporate the hard lessons of Buna into their training.

The Division gained a new

commander — Maj. Gen. William Gill, who would lead the Red Arrow for the remainder of their time in the Pacific Theater. His first task was to reforge a division that had been broken by disease and brutal fighting.

"It was a long, hard pull," Gill would write 10 years later. "Many times during

this period, I must confess that I had grave doubts as to whether the division would ever come back. But they did, and magnificently, as their victories in succeeding campaigns prove."

While the Red Arrow recovered, the fight against the Japanese continued. Gen. Douglas MacArthur, commander-



in-chief of the Southwest Pacific Area, was ordered to establish air bases roughly 300 miles east of Buna, on Woodlark and Kiriwina islands. He was also ordered to occupy western New Britain approximately 200 miles north of Buna, and to seize Huon Peninsula and Madang north of Buna along the coast. MacArthur also launched Operation Cartwheel, a series of amphibious landings designed for more strategic strikes against Japanese forces, cutting off enemy supplies and avoiding costly frontal assaults.

In six months the Red Arrow was once again ready for combat, and began moving toward its new objective: take the airstrip at Saidor, secure the surrounding area and trap a Japanese division. The terrain at Saidor was as challenging as Buna. By this time, due to Allied success in preventing large-scale reinforcement, the Japanese had adopted a fighting withdrawal strategy.

The 126th Infantry, which made the bulk of Michaelmas Task Force, had spent nine weeks training for amphibious landings. The Jan. 2, 1944 beach landings were unopposed, and the airfield area was quickly captured. The Red Arrow Division was better supplied and better prepared for this campaign, but unrelenting rain, dangerous rivers and impenetrable jungle hampered their efforts to prevent the determined Japanese from escaping.



**Michaelmas Task Force, comprised mostly of the 126th Infantry, departed Goodenough Island at 8 a.m. New Year's Eve, 1943 and landed its initial assault wave to take the Japanese airstrip at Saidor at 7:14 a.m. Jan. 2, 1944. The landings were unopposed and the objective was taken.**

**The red hashmarks indicate the task force's daily lines of operation Jan. 2 and Jan. 7. The solid red lines show the direction allied forces moved, and the dotted red lines indicate allied patrols. The dotted white lines show Japanese bypass routes. Image courtesy Google Maps**





The 2nd Battalion, 126th Infantry and other Red Arrow units took part in the landing at Yalau Plantation, roughly 30 miles west of Saidor, on March 5. The landing itself was unopposed, though subsequent patrols met Japanese resistance. By mid-April, U.S. and Australian forces controlled the area. The Saidor and Yalau Plantation operations benefitted from longer training, improved supplies and tactical air support, as well as naval gunfire.

MacArthur also was aided by allied forces deciphering the Japanese military code, which provided advance knowledge of Japanese troop movements as well as the ability to mislead the enemy with false information. This allowed the 24th and 41st Divisions to land unopposed at Hollandia on April 22, 1944, roughly 450 miles west along the coast from Saidor.

The next day, much of the 32nd Division's 127th Infantry and the 126th Field Artillery Battalion landed at Aitape, both to capture Japanese airstrips there as well as to block Japanese troops from Wewak from reinforcing Japanese troops in Hollandia. The 128th Infantry

**Soldiers from the 32nd Division emerge from the first wave of Landing Craft, Transport (LCT) boats during the invasion of Saidor, New Guinea, Jan. 2, 1944.** U.S. Army Signal Corps photo by Lt. Daniel Mason



remained in Saidor, and the remainder of the division supported Gen. Walter Krueger, commander of the U.S. Sixth Army, as Alamo Force reserve.

Japanese military strength in the Aitape area was found to be less than 1,000 troops, many of whom had fled inland. With the relative ease of the Aitape operation, Gill assumed command of Persecution Task Force, and would bring the 128th Infantry to Aitape from Saidor to assist, if needed, in the assault on the Wakde-Sarmi area 250 miles northwest. The 121st Field Artillery Battalion assisted the 41st Division in the capture of the island of

**Soldiers from the 32nd Division's 126th Infantry Regiment rush from Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI) boats during the first assault waves of the invasion of Saidor, New Guinea, Jan. 2, 1944.** U.S. Army Signal Corps photo





**Above, a determined Japanese foe made the 32nd Division's progress through New Guinea difficult in 1942-44. Image courtesy Google Maps**

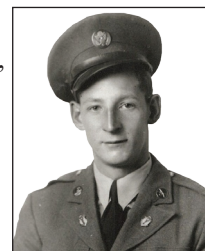
**At left, Soldiers from the 32nd Division's 3rd Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment move along the beach at Aitape, Dutch New Guinea to the front July 30, 1944. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo by Sgt. Carl Wienke**

Biak from May through October.

In early June the 128th returned to 32nd Division control, and by June 10 the entire division defended Tadjik airfield — the first time since September 1942 the Red Arrow, minus the 121st Field Artillery, was employed as a single unit. Additional forces would reinforce Persecution Force, and the 32nd Division would provide the manpower for the Eastern Sector and Covering Force.

The Japanese had not abandoned Aitape, however, and soon were harassing American troops along the Driniumor River with mixed results. While the 128th Infantry was withdrawing from its reconnaissance mission as part of a broader effort to thwart a Japanese push toward the airfield, Staff Sgt.

Gerald Endl of Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, a member of Company C, would posthumously receive the Medal of Honor for single-handedly engaging the enemy, preventing the capture of 11 wounded Soldiers by the Japanese on July 11, 1944.



**STAFF SGT.  
GERALD ENDL  
Medal of Honor  
recipient  
July 11, 1944**

By Aug. 1 the Japanese forces, estimated at about 4,000 troops, were





**The front line of the 32nd Division's 632nd Tank Destroyer Battalion moves up under the direction of an infantry patrol along the beach at Aitape, British New Guinea July 31, 1944. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo**

suffering from exhaustion, starvation and disease. They launched four days of poorly coordinated suicide attacks against 32nd Division troops. The battle for Aitape officially ended Aug. 25.

Aitape was Gen. Douglas MacArthur's costliest campaign since Buna, with 440 Soldiers killed, more than 2,500 wounded and 10 missing. But the Japanese had retreated, and the Tadjai airfield was safely in Allied hands

as a staging area for further operations.

The New Guinea campaign was drawing to a close for the 32nd Division, but one more chapter remained: Morotai, an island roughly 600 miles from Aitape and midway between New Guinea and Mindanao, the southernmost of the Philippine Islands. Deemed suitable for an air base and light naval base, the Allies attacked Morotai on Sept. 15, 1944.

The 32nd Division's 126th Infantry Regiment, 120th Field Artillery Battalion, and elements of the division's engineer, quartermaster, ordnance, signal, medical and military police units were part of the effort.

The 31st Division succeeded in taking the lightly defended island from the Japanese, leaving the 126th Infantry to establish posts along the shore and surrounding islands.

Subsequent Japanese counterattacks could not dislodge Allied troops.

The United States was in the final 12 months of World War II, and MacArthur was mere weeks from fulfilling his promise to return to the Philippines. The Red Arrow Division would spend 654 days in combat in the South Pacific — more than any other division during World War II. The Philippine island of Leyte awaited. †





**Soldiers from the 32nd Division's 120th Field Artillery unload a small aircraft, which will be used for artillery observation, from a Landing Craft, Transport (LCT) boat during landing operations at Saidor, New Guinea, Jan. 2, 1944. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo by Lt. Daniel Mason**



**Soldiers from the 32nd Division's 126th Infantry Regiment rush from Landing Craft, Personnel (LCP) boats during the first assault waves of the invasion of Saidor, New Guinea, Jan. 2, 1944. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo**





Top left, Cpl. George Feldt of Green Bay, Wis., a member of the 32nd Division's Battery B, 121st Field Artillery Battalion, at an artillery observation point on a high ridge seven miles from Saidor, New Guinea Jan. 21, 1944. LSTs (landing ship, tank) seen in the distance have just unloaded supplies at White Beach. Bottom left, fellow Battery B member Pfc. Ward Laflin of Green Bay sights through a B-C scope. Above, A 32nd gun position in the vicinity of Company F and Company G, 126th Infantry Regiment, on a high ridge near MUR Plantation seven miles from Saidor, New Guinea Jan. 21. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos by Lt. D.G. Mason





**Above, Brig. Gen. Robert B. McBride, Jr., 32nd Division artillery officer, confers with other men near Teterei, New Guinea Feb. 22, 1944. At right, 32nd Division Soldiers from Company C, 126th Infantry Regiment, cross the Seng River near Saidor, New Guinea Feb. 25, 1944. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos by Pvt. Ira Rosenberg**







**Above, 32nd Division Soldiers march off the beach at Korake, Aitape, Dutch New Guinea to their bivouac area May 3, 1944.**

**Center, 32nd Division commander Maj. Gen. William Gill leaves the beach en route to headquarters at Aitape May 3. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**

**Right, 121st Field Artillery Battalion Soldiers shell Japanese gun positions over Nokmer Drome, Biak Island, Dutch New Guinea with 75mm howitzers June 23. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo by Tech. 5 Ralph Dickerman**







**Above, 32nd Soldiers are ferried in a DUKW amphibious transport to the front lines at Aitape along a beach on British New Guinea July 27, 1944. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo**

**At right, a tank destroyer from the 32nd Division's 632nd Tank Destroyer Battalion moves along the beach at Aitape, New Guinea July 31, 1944. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo by Sgt. Carl Wienke**





# The Red Arrow pierces another unbreakable line

As 1944 drew to a close, New Guinea was finally behind the 32nd Division. The Philippines, and Gen. Douglas MacArthur's long-awaited return, lay ahead.

Determined to prevent the U.S. from liberating the Philippines, Japan engaged in the decisive naval Battle of Leyte Gulf in late October — a battle Japan lost, at great cost to its navy.

When the 32nd Division became the first U.S. Army division to take offensive action against the Japanese in 1942, they were one of only two divisions in theater. But now seven U.S. Army divisions were on hand for the Leyte campaign, and the 32nd was initially held in reserve. Lack of available transport ships kept them from landing on the centrally located Philippine island until Nov. 14, 1944. By the time they arrived, Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita commanded the Japanese ground forces in the Philippines.

**Soldiers from the 32nd Division's 127th Infantry Regiment look over burning Japanese tanks disabled by American tanks north of Lonoy, Leyte, Philippine Islands Dec. 22, 1944.**

U.S. Army Signal Corps photo







**The 32nd Division would end combat operations in the Philippine Islands in 1945.** Image courtesy Google Maps

Though he doubtless understood that Japan was no longer capable of winning the war in the Pacific, Yamashita was committed to fighting the war as long as he had men and weaponry.

The 32nd Division replaced the 24th Division, which had been driving the Japanese back along Breakneck Ridge and had captured high ground north of the village of Limon. The 128th Infantry Regiment was ordered to capture Limon, beginning the operation Nov. 22. The effort required “bitter, close hand-to-hand fighting,” according to the official U.S. Army history of the campaign. The Japanese built fighting positions in road banks and at the base of trees and under logs, taking advantage of the turns and bends of the path to target advancing Red Arrow Soldiers. The steep terrain and density of U.S. troops reduced the effect of artillery and mortar fire. The 128th Infantry achieved their objective within a few days, though Japanese counter-attacks continued until mid-December.

By Dec. 21, 1944 the fight for Leyte



**GEN. TOMOYUKI YAMASHITA**



**Soldiers from the 32nd Division’s Company I, 126th Infantry Regiment, cross the Orbbredo River en route to the front lines in Luzon, Philippine Islands Feb. 25, 1945.** U.S. Army Signal Corps photo by Sgt. William Barbero

was largely over, despite a fierce effort by the Japanese, who had been ordered by the emperor to destroy enemy ground forces. Japanese troop losses were staggering — 56,263 killed, and 392 captured. The Red Arrow, after 36 days of combat, forced a passage through the mountains from Pinamopao to the Ormac Valley.

While the 32nd Division waited to begin their final campaign, they learned that Capt. Herman Bottcher,



**CAPT. HERMAN BOTTCHER**

whose heroics as a staff sergeant during the Buna campaign earned him a battlefield commission, was killed on Dec. 31, 1944.

Luzon — the largest and northernmost of the Philippine



islands, and home to the capitol Manila — would be the next target for the Red Arrow. While capturing Manila was the obvious prize of this campaign, Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, commander of Sixth Army, waited until the 32nd Division and 1st Cavalry Division had arrived on Luzon Jan. 27, 1945 — 18 days after U.S. forces made a surprise amphibious assault at Lingayen Gulf — to avoid overextending his forces in the drive to the capitol.

Yamashita had 150,000 troops at his disposal on Luzon, including 110,000 combat troops, though U.S. military planners revised their estimate of enemy strength to 235,000 troops.

When the 32nd Division arrived, Krueger's Sixth Army was already advancing on Manila. The Red Arrow's 126th Infantry Regiment initially stayed behind as part of the Sixth Army reserve, though it would rejoin the division. The remainder of the division advanced northeast, along river valleys and the mostly unimproved Villa Verde Trail which connected the Lingayan Gulf to the Cagayan Valley in northeastern Luzon, traversing the Caraballo Mountains.

Much like parts of the Leyte campaign and the Buna campaign, the 27-mile Villa Verde Trail would restrict the 32nd Division to narrow lanes of advance, exposing Red Arrow Soldiers to well-camouflaged Japanese fighting



**A 32nd Division mortar crew along the Villa Verde Trail in Luzon, Philippine Islands March 24, 1945. This crew had been in a back-and-forth battle with Japanese mortars, located 300 yards away, for three days. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo by Lt. Lloyd Halter**

positions from a flanking ridge north of the trail referred to as Yamashita's Ridge.

"Repeated visits to this front had made me fully cognizant of the tough

conditions facing the 32nd Division, but I was confident it would overcome all difficulties successfully," Krueger would later write of the 32nd Division's thankless task.



**Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, 6th Army commander, and his inspection party tour the front line positions of the 32nd Division along the Villa Verde Trail in Luzon, Philippine Islands March 18, 1945. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo by Tech. 5 James Buskroyd**





In addition to the enemy's excellent defensive posture, the trail itself provided challenges of its own. The winding path made it difficult to keep units supplied, and some troop strength was required to protect communication lanes to the rear. The division's 114th Engineer Battalion worked to transform approximately 20 miles of the trail into passable road — known as "Little Burma Road" — earning a position near the top of Yamashita's "must destroy" list.

Under the circumstances, the 32nd Division's progress was "slow and bloody," Krueger recalled, "and demanded the utmost of valor and fortitude on the part of our troops."

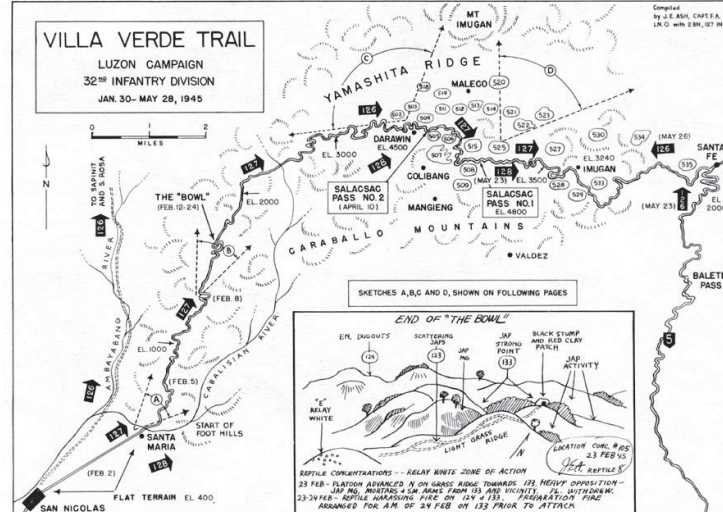
In mid-April, Krueger would reassure Maj. Gen. William Gill, 32nd Division commander, that he understood the Red Arrow was doing the best it could. However, the division could expect no additional assistance. Gill would rotate the 127th and 128th Infantry regiments on the trail while the 126th advanced along the Ambayang River valley below. The 126th would later be

**32nd Division Soldiers from Company L, 3rd Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, dug in on top of Hill 604 along the Villa Verde Trail, fire on Japanese positions over the next ridge April 1, 1945. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo**





**32nd Division Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry Regiment on the alert for enemy action on Hill 511 along the Villa Verde Trail, Luzon, Philippine Islands April 12, 1945. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**



attached to the 25th Division, and play a role in clearing the Villa Verde Trail. At one point, battlefield attrition brought the 128th Infantry Regiment down to approximately 1,500 men, roughly half strength.

In May, the 32nd Division had reached the bulwark of Yamashita's defenses on the Villa Verde Trail. Sometimes referred to as the Kongo Fortress, the Japanese considered it impenetrable. After a fierce five-day assault, the Red Arrow's 127th and 128th Infantry regiments overwhelmed the Japanese defenses and eliminated resistance by May 27. Meanwhile, the 126th Infantry Regiment captured the high ground north of the Villa Verde Trail the following day. The U.S. now controlled the trail.

**This map, compiled by field artillery officer Capt. J.E. Ash of the 127th Infantry, shows the 32nd Division's progress along the Villa Verde Trail.**



“The 32nd Division has accomplished its mission,” Gill wrote in a general order commemorating the victory. “The enemy has been destroyed and the Villa Verde Trail secured. A passage has been forced through the Caraballo Mountains from the Central Plain to the entrance of the Cagayan Valley, thus hastening the completion of the Luzon Campaign.

“After 120 days of fierce hand-to-hand combat over terrain more difficult than any yet encountered in this war, the ‘Red Arrow’ again pierced the enemy’s line,” Gill continued. “You have crushed completely another of the enemy’s so-called impregnable defenses, brilliantly concluding the Division’s fifth campaign in the Pacific Theater.”

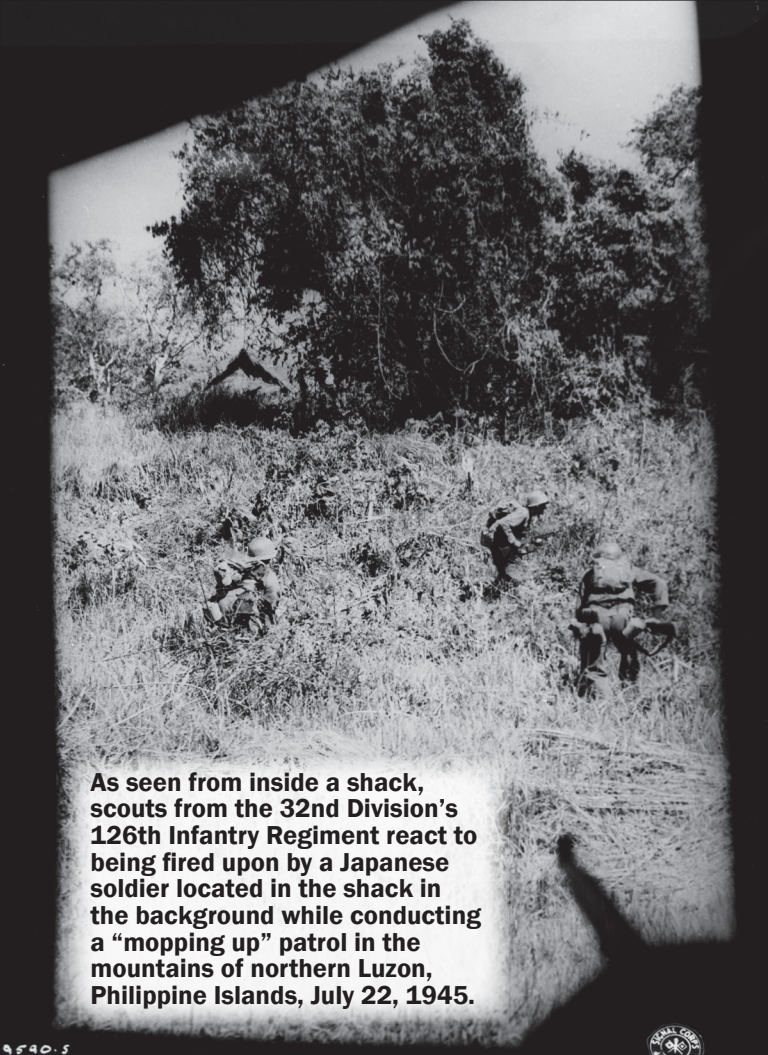
Gill went on to praise the officers and enlisted men of the 32nd Division, saying he looked forward to the division’s continued success “into the heart of Tokyo.” But that pride masked his dissatisfaction with higher command. After the war, he would compare MacArthur and his staff with shoppers

**A 19-year-old Japanese soldier voluntarily surrendered to 32nd Division Soldiers in the vicinity of Hill 506A in the Caraballo Mountains in northern Luzon, Philippine Islands April 16, 1945. The Japanese soldier spoke some English and, after learning that he would not be killed, provided much valuable information.**

**He said he did not like Japanese authority, was in Tokyo when it was bombed, and asked if it was true that Japanese troops had landed in the United States. He is seen here being given something to eat. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo**







**As seen from inside a shack, scouts from the 32nd Division's 126th Infantry Regiment react to being fired upon by a Japanese soldier located in the shack in the background while conducting a "mopping up" patrol in the mountains of northern Luzon, Philippine Islands, July 22, 1945.**



**Above, Soldiers from the 32nd Division's Company E, 128th Infantry Regiment, search for Japanese troops after a July 27, 1945 skirmish**

**in the Cagayan Valley, Luzon, Philippine Islands. The Luzon campaign had ended, but fighting continued. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**

who overspent on a meager purchase: "The Villa Verde Trail cost us too high in battle casualties for the value it received."

CBS war correspondent William J. Dunn reported on the exploits of the 32nd Division from the heart of Kongo Fortress.

"Two and a half years ago down at Buna on the flat coastal plain of eastern New Guinea, I saw this same division fight the first big-scale attack ever staged by American troops in the southern Pacific," Dunn said. "It was the 32nd that started us on an entirely new type of warfare — jungle warfare — at Buna and taught us how to beat the [Japanese] out of their foxholes and pillboxes. Now the 32nd is just about to complete a four-months campaign of an entirely different sort — a mountain campaign over ranges as rugged as I ever saw in New Guinea, China or Burma — a campaign as different from Burma as black from white.

"Maj. Gen. William H. Gill has a right to be

proud of his fighting 32nd."

Gen. Joseph Stilwell, a veteran of Allied campaigns in China and presently in charge of ground troop training, visited the division in June and acknowledged the difficulty of the Red Arrow's victory.

"This was as tough as anything could be," Stilwell said. "Terrain doesn't come any worse. In Burma it was thick, impenetrable jungle, and here it's cliffs seemingly impossible to scale and the worst sort of mountain terrain. Burma or this sector — it's a toss-up.

"The Division has a splendid record which will be very hard to beat," Stilwell said.

The Luzon Campaign officially ended July 4, 1945, though the 32nd Division continued active operations against Japanese forces until Aug. 15, and though some men hoped to be shipped home, most anticipated their next mission would be to invade Japan itself. †





Above, A bulldozer pulls the weight off a thrown track from a tank belonging to Company B, 775th Tank Battalion — attached to the 32nd Division — on the Villa Verde Trail in Luzon, Philippine Islands April 3, 1945. The tank, which threw its track turning a sharp corner, was used to draw enemy fire in order to locate enemy positions. At left, advancing 32nd Division troops find the going tough on the Villa Verde Trail in Luzon, Philippine Islands sometime in May 1945. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos





**Above, Soldiers from the mortar section of Company G, 128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Division, pass ammunition from a 3/4-ton truck on the road to the mortar positions 40 yards away, near San Nicholas, Luzon, Philippine Islands April 9, 1945. U.S. Signal Corps photo by Tech. 5 L. J. Stettner**

**At left, a P-51 Mustang strafes enemy positions during an air strike in front of the line of attack for the 32nd Division's 126th Infantry Regiment at San Nicholas, April 12. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo**





**Above, Soldiers from the 32nd Division's 127th Heavy Weapons Company on Hill 506 provide overhead cover fire for other Red Arrow troops on the Villa Verde Trail in northern Luzon, Philippine Islands, May 2, 1945. At right, Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 126th Infantry Regiment head down a hill into Santa Fe, Luzon, Philippine Islands June 1, 1945. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**





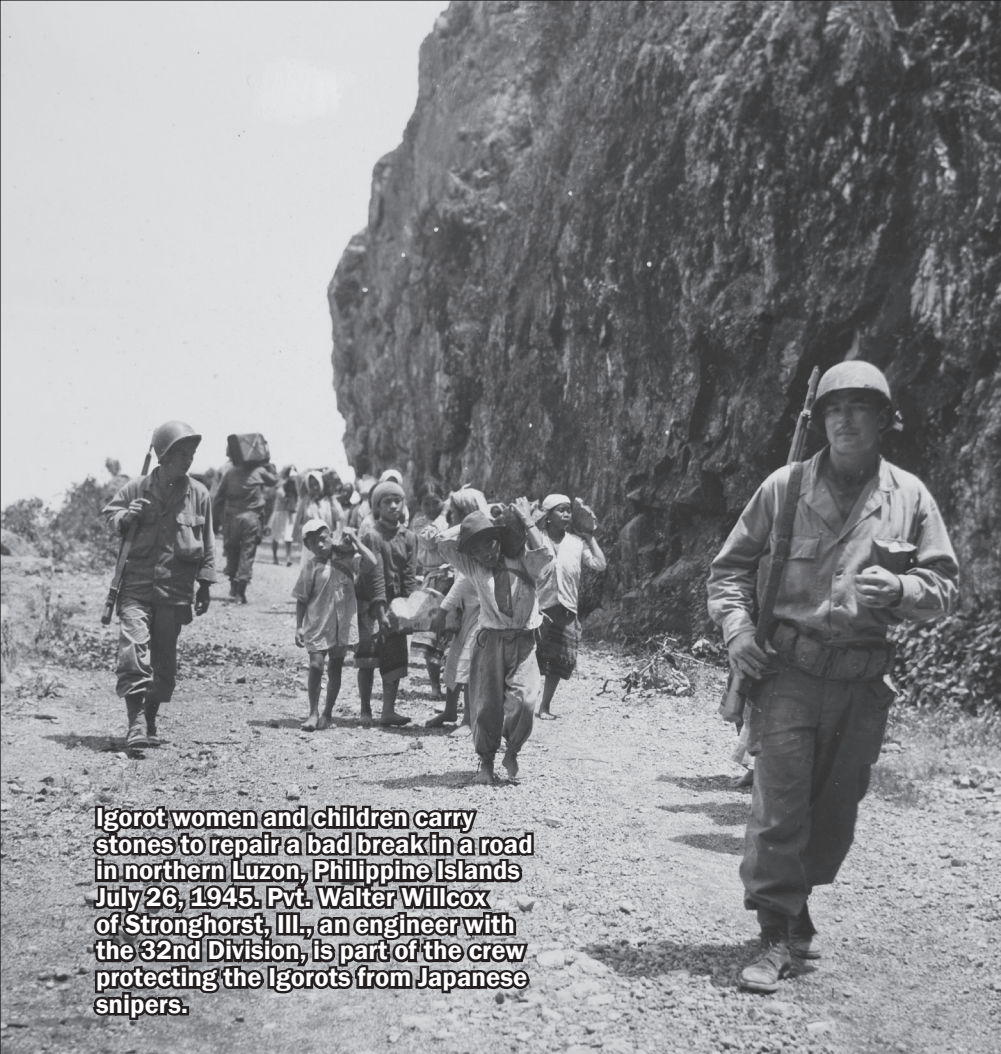


At left, A Japanese-American interpreter from the intelligence section of the 32nd Division's 127th Infantry Regiment speaks to Japanese troops in a valley at Pali, Luzon along Highway 11 July 5, 1945. This psychological warfare group was instrumental in capturing many Japanese troops.



Above, Igarot men and women carry stretchers bearing wounded 32nd Division Soldiers over a long, rough portion of the Villa Verde Trail July 5. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos





Igorot women and children carry stones to repair a bad break in a road in northern Luzon, Philippine Islands July 26, 1945. Pvt. Walter Willcox of Stronghorst, Ill., an engineer with the 32nd Division, is part of the crew protecting the Igorots from Japanese snipers.



Scouts from the 32nd "Red Arrow" Division's 126th Infantry Regiment take cover as they advance on a shack holding Japanese soldiers in the mountains of northern Luzon, Philippine Islands, July 22, 1945. The Japanese soldiers continue to fight desperately, firing wildly as the Red Arrow Soldiers move closer. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos





*"I doubt if anyone, anywhere, is more profoundly moved by this news than the men of this division, who have fought so hard, suffered so much and waited so long for this moment."*  
 — Maj. Gen. William Gill, 32nd Division commander, on Japan's Aug. 15, 1945 announcement of surrender.

# The Red Arrow fights right to the very end

The 32nd Division, like other American forces in the South Pacific, awaited orders sending them to Japan to conclude the second world war's final chapter. Those orders never came after the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan Aug. 6, 1945. Three days later, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan. Japanese Emperor Hirohito broadcast his surrender announcement Aug. 15.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur emerged from an

**At left, The war remains a grim reality for this 32nd Division Soldier Aug. 13, 1945 as he receives blood plasma at an aid station in northern Luzon, Philippine Islands. This photo was taken shortly before Japan's radio offer to capitulate. Meanwhile, U.S. troops continued to encounter isolated pockets of stubborn resistance. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo**



**Gen. Douglas MacArthur greets Lt. Gen. Robert Eichelberger in Japan Aug. 30, 1945. U.S. Army photo**

unarmed C-54 aircraft Aug. 30, 1945, which had brought him from Melbourne, Australia to Atsugi, Japan, and lit his corncob pipe. Descending the stairs, he met Lt. Gen. Robert Eichelberger, whom MacArthur once directed to take Buna or not return alive.



“Bob, from Melbourne to Tokyo is a long way, but this seems to be the end of the road,” MacArthur said.

From the Owen Stanley Mountains in New Guinea to Luzon, Philippines, the 32nd Division had walked that long, winding and deadly road for 654 days, more than any other American unit. Two Red Arrow Soldiers in the 128th Infantry Regiment were killed in Banzai charges Aug. 15, the same day Japanese Emperor Hirohito broadcast his surrender announcement.

Maj. Gen. William Gill, 32nd Division commander, communicated with Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita, who commanded all Japanese forces in the Philippines, to arrange the surrender of Japanese forces. Yamashita replied that he had received no official authorization to enter surrender negotiations, but acknowledged that he instructed his subordinate units “insofar as communications were possible” to cease hostilities.

Col. Merle Howe of Grand Rapids, Michigan, who on separate occasions commanded the 126th, 127th and 128th Infantry regiments and was described by Eichelberger as a “stalwart fighting man,” died Aug. 30, 1945 while in an airplane

that crashed due to engine failure while delivering messages to Yamashita.

1st Lt. Russell Baumann of Glenbeulah, Wisconsin, leading a 24-man detachment from Company I, 128th Infantry Regiment, met Yamashita and his staff on a hilltop near Kiangang, Luzon at 8 a.m. Sept. 2, when Yamashita officially surrendered to the 32nd Division.

“I have the honor to inform you that I have been charged with seeing you and your party through our lines without hindrance, delay or molestation,” Baumann said. Through an interpreter, Yamashita replied, “I want to tell you how much I appreciate the courtesy and good treatment you have shown us.”

While in Kiangang, Yamashita’s chief of staff Lt. Gen. Akira Muto asked about the Red Arrow insignia. Col. Ernest Barlow, the 32nd Division’s chief of staff, explained the significance of the Red Arrow piercing the impenetrable Hindenburg Line in World War I which inspired the design of the insignia.

“Yes, and the Yamashita Line in World War II,” Muto is said to have replied.

“It was entirely fitting that the 32nd Division should receive the vanquished enemy,” Eichelberger



**Defiant to the very end and refusing to capitulate until Japan formally surrendered in Tokyo, Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita, commander of all Japanese forces in the Philippines, is shown Sept. 2, 1945, as he surrenders the battered remnants of his once-formidable forces to the 32nd “Red Arrow” Division at Kiangang in northern Luzon, Philippine Islands. From left to right: Col. Ernest Barlow, 32nd Division chief of staff; Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita; Lt. Col. Alex Robinet, 128th Infantry Regiment executive officer; and two unidentified members of Yamashita’s staff. Yamashita signed surrender documents the following day. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo**



would later write. “Three years before at Buna they had won the battle that started the infantry on the jungle road to Tokyo.”

Gill was not on hand for the surrender — by this time he had already turned over command of the 32nd Division to Brig. Gen. Robert McBride. Yamashita and his staff were taken to Baguio, Luzon — Yamashita’s headquarters — for a formal surrender ceremony on Sept. 3.

During his subsequent interrogation by Sixth Army, Yamashita indicated that he considered the 32nd Division to be the best Soldiers his men faced at Leyte and Luzon.

Even though the war was now officially over, the Red Arrow was not ready to return home quite yet. The 32nd Division did indeed advance to Japan, landing at Kyushu on Oct. 9, 1945 to begin occupation duties. In January 1946, the division learned it would be inactivated in Japan, and began turning occupation duties over to other units. The 32nd Division was formally inactivated Feb. 28, but reorganized later that year in Milwaukee. The Red Arrow



**BRIG. GEN.  
ROBERT MCBRIDE**

was federally recognized as a National Guard division once again Nov. 8, 1946.

The 32nd Division claimed the following records:

- 654 days of combat
- 15,696 hours of combat, more than any U.S. division in any war, and 48 percent of the total time the U.S. was in World War II
- Six major engagements during four campaigns
- 41 months overseas, with more than 21 months in combat
- Responsible for 35,000 Japanese soldiers killed in action
- 11 Medals of Honor
- 157 Distinguished Service

Crosses

- 49 Legion of Merit
- 845 Silver Stars
- 1,854 Bronze Stars
- 98 Air Medals
- 78 Soldier’s Medals
- 11,500 Purple Hearts

“I’m proud of these men who fought at Buna, at Saidor, the Drimiumor, on Morotai, on Leyte and on Luzon,” Gill said in the division’s newspaper Aug. 16, 1945. “I also think this is an appropriate time to remember the sacrifice of the men who died in those battles. This is their moment, too.” †

**The U.S. Armed Forces Cemetery  
near Grace Mark in Manila,  
Luzon, Philippine Islands. U.S.  
Army Signal Corps photo**







**Above, a Japanese civilian and Soldiers from the 32nd Division's 127th Infantry Regiment try to entertain a Japanese baby found wandering around the railroad station at Sasebe, Kyushu, Japan Oct. 18, 1945. At left, Pfc. Henry Meras of Stockton, Calif., a member of the 32nd Division's 128th Infantry Regiment, is tutored in Japanese by local children while waiting for a train at Sasebe Oct. 18. U.S. Army Signal Corps photos**



# Epilogue

The 32nd Division would be called to federal service one more time in its history. On Oct. 15, 1961, exactly 21 years after it was called to federal service for World War II, the Red Arrow reported to Fort Lewis, Washington to prepare for potential service in the Berlin Crisis.

In 1967, 50 years after it first organized for World War I, the 32nd Division was inactivated and reorganized as the 32nd Separate Infantry Brigade. Nearly all of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's current units trace their lineage to the 32nd Division.

In 1986 the 32nd Brigade became the largest National Guard unit to participate in a REFORGER (Return of Forces to Germany) exercise, also setting milestones by bringing all of its assigned equipment rather than falling in on pre-positioned equipment, demonstrating that a National Guard brigade could rapidly deploy to the European Theater and be combat ready in a time of crisis.

In 2009 the entire 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team deployed to various camps in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. †



Above left, Spc. 4 Raymond Starde, gunner, and Pvt. 2nd Class Richard Falk (loader) fire their machine gun on Circle Trigon infantry elements that are pressing an attack on friendly forces during Exercise "Mesa Drive" at Yakima Firing Center in Yakima, Wash., May 13, 1962. Both Soldiers are part of the 32nd Division's Company C, 2nd Battle Group, 127th Infantry Regiment. U.S. Army photo by Spc. 4 Elias T. Tallas

Above, family members and public officials bid farewell to some 3,200 members of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team and augmenting units, Wisconsin Army National Guard, in a large ceremony at the Dane County Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Madison, Feb. 17, 2009. They would deploy for approximately 10 months in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photo by Larry Sommers

At left, Brig. Gen. Charles F. Scharine, 32nd Brigade commander, confers with his staff officers in the tactical operations center near Tannesburg, Germany, Jan. 22 1986 during REFORGER. Wisconsin National Guard photo





# 654

THE RED ARROW  
IN WORLD WAR II