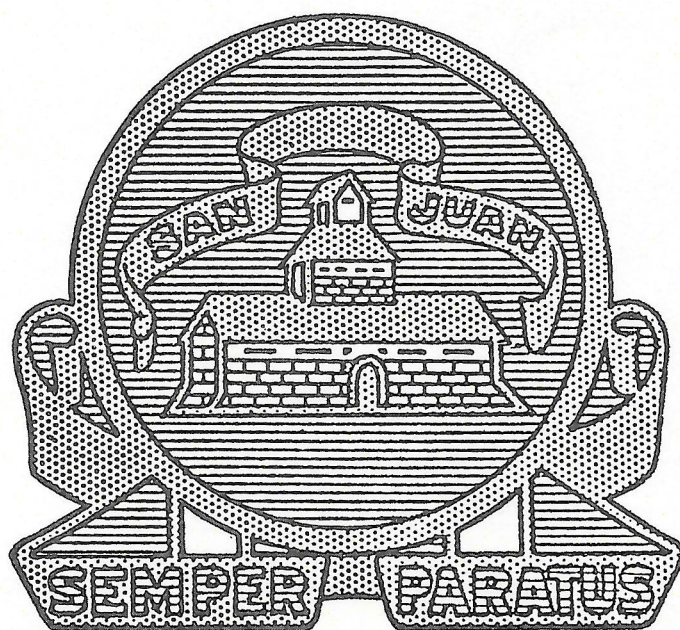


LAST OF THE BLACK REGULARS

A History of the
24th Infantry Regiment (1869-1951)



L. Albert Scipio II

COPY NUMBER 81

At 1630, 23 Jan 51, Taegu: Telephoned Scotch 5 on air surveillance Han river and on General Kean's recommendation to integrate white and colored troops, to include breaking up 24th Infantry.¹⁰

The final fate of the 24th Infantry Regiment was outlined in a secret letter from Army Chief of Staff, GEN J. Lawton Collins, to GEN Ridgway, who had since moved up to replace GEN Douglas MacArthur as Commander, Far East Command:

... Reference your suggestion with respect to the 24th Infantry, we have that whole matter under intensive study now. It is my personal conviction and it will be my recommendation, that we do away with segregation in the Far East Command. The details of how to handle the 24th and other units of the same character, will have to be worked out by you and Van Fleet with, of course, some assistance from our G-1 people here. I do feel that it would be inadvisable to return the 24th Infantry to the United States. The law requiring that it be a negro unit was rescinded when the Army Organization Bill passed last year. My guess would be that the best thing to do would be to withdraw the 24th from the 25th Division into reserve. Its place in the Division could be taken by some unit like the Turkish Brigade if neither the 29th nor the 34th Infantry is in condition to fight. The personnel of the 24th would have to be distributed throughout your command. Individuals entitled rotation would, of course, be sent home. In order to find spots for the non-commissioned officers, who still have time to do in the Far East, it might be advisable to transfer them to negro service units until the latter can likewise be broken up. The whole thing would have to be done over some period of time, and we would certainly follow your recommendation as to the time and the method to be followed. Needless to say, this whole matter will have to be cleared with the Chairmen of our Service Committees and with other authorities in Washington. The publicity with regard to this move will have to be handled most carefully. When final approval is obtained, we will advise you. It might be worthwhile to send out a G-1 and perhaps a public relations man, to work out the details with your staff. I would like to have your reactions to this suggestion. . . .

In order to give more opportunity for change for the commanders, staffs and key non-commissioned officers, I think you could plan on rotating divisions to Japan using the two National Guard divisions in Korea whenever you feel they are in condition to fight. Incidentally, I think you should plan to assign negroes to these two divisions, gradually, as you make integration effective. There may be some repercussions from Oklahoma, but I feel that we must simply take this step now and we cannot treat the Guard divisions any differently than the others.¹¹

On September 28, the alert for pending inactivation was received by the 24th Infantry and the following day, conferences were held to plan for movement to a new area for the purpose of inactivation. The regiment had its last contact with the enemy, it released control of its zone of responsibility to the 14th Infantry who replaced it in the 25th Division. On the 29th, the 24th Infantry left its position in Line Wyoming for Chipo-ri.

So it was, on October 1, 1951, the 24th Infantry Regiment was inactivated at Chipo-ri, Korea, in accordance with General Orders No. 717, Office of the Commanding General, Eighth U.S. Army, dated September 22, 1951.

Upon Reflection

After experiencing only limited combat duty during most of World War II, men of the regiment welcomed the opportunity to perform as combat infantrymen. The performance of the regiment in clearing Saipan of Japanese resistance during the last days of World War II supports the point that the 24th Infantry was willing to function as part of the Infantry, "Queen of Battle."

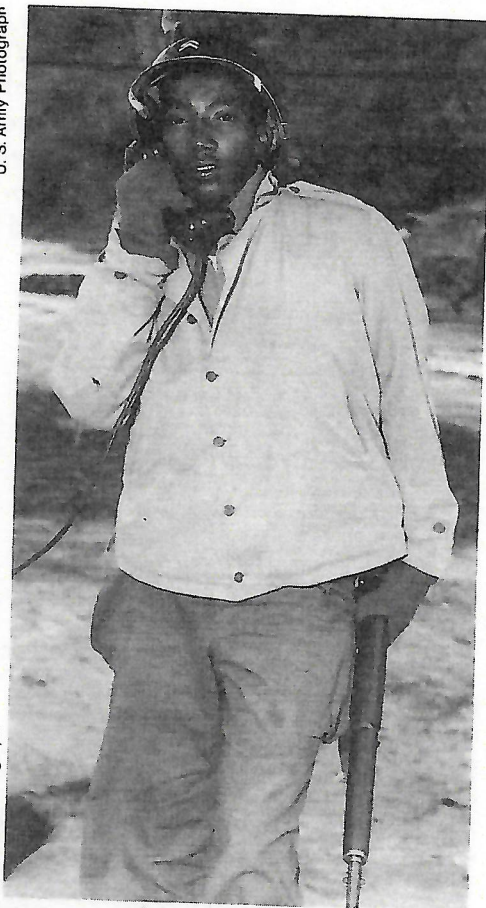
10 The Matthew B. Ridgeway Papers. Eighth Army Correspondence; Commanding General Daily Historical Report.

11 Op. cit.



REMAINING MEMBERS OF I & R PLATOON
May 6, 1951

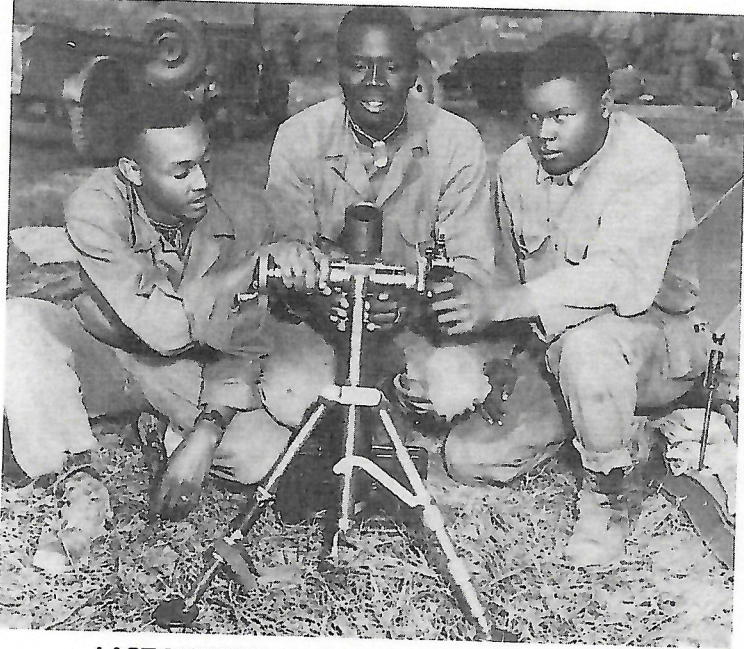
U. S. Army Photograph



CPL HOMER JONES
MAKING LAST PHONE CALL FOR REGT.
September 30, 1951

U. S. Army Photograph

U. S. Army Photograph



LAST MORTAR CREW OF REGIMENT TO FIRE
October 1, 1951

U. S. Army Photograph



PFC RICHARD A. BORDEN and 1LT JAMES BLACKSHEAR
Chipo-ri, Korea - October 1 1951

EPILOGUE

So it was on October 1, 1951, the last of the six original Colored Regulars, created after the Civil War, was retired from Army rolls. That was an historic day in Korea, one which would have saddened those men of the regiment who stormed up San Juan Hill. We are talking about nothing less than the *extinction* of the 24th Infantry Regiment. In a country whose beginnings are cloaked in legend, the last of the all-Black Regulars was laid to rest without fanfare. On October 2, a few men were gathered to perform the required ceremony of casing the colors, a symbolic action ending a unit's service.

With the elimination of separate black units in Korea, an era in American military history came to an end. While I welcome integration of the Armed Forces as an act decades overdue, I sorrow that the 24th Infantry Regiment is now extinct.

In the U.S. Army, the regiment has always been the principal repository of Army history and tradition. To assure that honors and lineages be passed on and the histories of old regiments be perpetuated, the Army adopted the Combat Arms Regimental System (CARS) on January 24, 1957. Initially 55 infantry regiments were chosen in the Regular Army but the 24th and 25th Infantry were omitted. The CAR System included the 1st through 23rd, and 26th, etc., Infantry Regiments. In my opinion, the omission of the 24th and 25th from CARS is an injustice attended upon the black men who served and died under their regimental colors. Perhaps, in time, the Army will see fit to rectify the matter.

There are only a few left from those old days who knew the regiment prior to World War II. And, in only a few more years, the books will be closed forever. That fact has been the driving force for this work. We have laid the regiment open so all can see the efforts of people who did their jobs as best they could, in spite of tremendous odds. Lack of training, insufficient tools, absence of credit for deeds well done, etc., were obstacles to be overcome by the men of the 24th.

Our mission to present a detailed, accurate story of the 24th Infantry which could withstand the most painstaking scrutiny will conclude with the following words of personal tribute:

TO THE TWENTY-FOURTH!

— L. Albert Scipio II

24th, you sprang from the ashes of the Civil War,
A real opportunity came at last;
But like an unwanted child, you were not encouraged to go very far,
Notwithstanding, you remained steadfast.

I recall your birth in Texas, that day in 1869,
You were an experiment, something to be tried for awhile—
A permanent black Army unit was not in mind
But you accepted the challenge with a smile.

Though not well-known, you served with honor in the West
But you had to wait for Cuba to gain attention;
Your victories compare with the very best,
Even then you received merely limited mention.

Throughout your life, there were many San Juan Hills to ascend,
You took them in stride with your head held erect.
That the problems were special, we need not pretend—
Nevertheless history's treatment is not entirely correct.

Those of us who know the truth of your past,
See your men, not boys, standing straight and tall,
Reaching from the Western Plains to Korea, the place of last
Lined up to answer your country's call.

Not many of us are left who knew your embrace,
That makes us very special indeed;
With your colors cased and no one to take your place
No longer will you serve America's need.

Sorry to say, practically all of those who could best appreciate these contents are no longer among us. Like the 24th Infantry, they, too, are gone. But, from those of us who remain:

Men of the 24th Infantry Regiment — the BLOCKHOUSERS — we salute you!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

L. Albert Scipio II, BS (Arch), BCE, MS, PhD

Professor L. Albert Scipio's life in architecture, engineering, and science, has brought him a varied and distinguished career leading to his present special position of honor as "University Professor" at Howard University, Washington, D.C. Prior to his appointment at Howard University, Professor Scipio served on the faculties of Tuskegee Institute, University of Minnesota, Cairo University (Egypt), University of Puerto Rico, and University of Pittsburgh.

Professor Scipio's biographical listing is included in many national and international books of reference: *Men of Achievement*, *International Who's Who of Intellectuals*, *Dictionary of International Biography*, *International Scholars Directory*, *International Register of Profiles*, *Who's Who in World Aviation and Astronautics*, *American Men in Science*, *Who's Who in International Engineering*, *Who's Who in American Education*, *Notable Americans of the Bicentennial Era*, *Leaders in American Science*, and others.

Professor Scipio served as an Army officer in World War II. His military service included four years active duty and six years in the reserves. A member of the Army Science Board and Board of Visitors of the Air Force Institute of Technology, he has also served in several capacities for the Department of the Army and other Federal agencies.

Dr. Scipio's ties with the 24th Infantry were several. His father spent 27 years (1915-1942) with the Regiment, serving his last years with the unit as the Regimental Sergeant Major. The author, an "Army brat," was born in the Regiment and came with it to Fort Benning, GA when the 24th left the *Border* (Camp Furlong, New Mexico) in 1922. As a boy, he not only served as the mascot for the Regimental Baseball Team, he enjoyed an unusual participation with the troops and their activities.

This book is written by a person who enjoyed a direct personal relationship with the 24th Infantry Regiment which lasted over 20 years and whose interest in the subject goes far beyond mere scholarship.

His other books include: *Compendium of Aircraft Stress Analysis and Design* (1956), *Principles of Continua with Applications* (1966), *Structural Design Concepts* (1967), and *E. M. Collar Insignia (1907-1926)*, with B.D. Patterson (1981).



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