

TITLE: United States Army Desert Training Center Collection

DATE RANGE: 1938 - 2010

CALL NUMBER: Y-MS 20

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 6 boxes (3 linear feet)

PROVENANCE: Collection materials have been donated by an assortment of individuals associated with the center.

COPYRIGHT: Unknown

RESTRICTIONS: This collection is unrestricted.

CREDIT LINE: United States Army Desert Training Center Collection, Y-MS 20, Yuma County Library District

PROCESSED BY: Benjamin Findley, 2014

HISTORICAL NOTE: The Desert Training Center was established in 1942 to provide training in desert warfare for troops slated to be deployed to the African theatre of World War II. Major General George S. Patton Jr. was tasked with setting up the Center and was designated its first Commanding General. A large tract of land approximately 10,000 square miles was chosen along the California-Arizona border and the southern tip of Nevada. This area was chosen because it included variety of desert terrains and had no large population centers.

Operations began in April, 1942. This allowed the U. S. Army to test standard army equipment against the harsh environment and to develop a desert tactical doctrine. The supply officers contended with maintaining supply routes without access to railroad lines. Many of the initial training exercises resulted in high casualty rates due to restrictions on water rations. In July, 1942 Patton was abruptly re-assigned to the North African Campaign leaving Major General Alvan Gillem in command.

The success of the North African Campaign by late 1942 meant that the Army no longer needed troops trained for desert combat. The Army increased the size of the area to approximately 87,000 square miles and changed its name from the Desert Training Center to the California-Arizona Maneuver Area. The focus of the training now shifted to a simulated war-time operations theatre. The Army also increased the military population to nearly 200,000, setting up different camps from which various troops would fight in simulated battle conditions. In late 1943 the increased number of troops deployed overseas made maintaining a heavily staffed training area impossible. The California-Arizona Maneuver Area was closed in April 1944.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: This collection consists of materials donated from multiple sources, primarily soldiers that spent time in the training centers. There is also material copied from the National Archives.

The collection is organized into six series:

Series I – Camps: Contains information specific to individual camps that were part of the training area. The files deal primarily with camps in Arizona, although there is some material on California camps. The Bouse folder contains information about the Canal Defense Light, a classified project that was tested at the camp. The project, originally developed by the British, involved modified tanks with a high power strobe light which would allow allied troops better vision at night while disorienting the enemy.

Series II – Desert Training Center: A number of documents in this series are copies from the National Archives consisting of memorandums and reports made concerning the Center. There are also various articles, letters and other material written long after the Center had been shut down. The Medical Corps Folder gives an overview of the medical units in the Center. The Site Preservation folder holds two reports, one on a proposed site interpretation plan for the Center as a historical landmark, and the other is a study of historical and archeological contexts of the sites.

Series III – Photographs: This series contains a number of copies of photos, primarily taken by various soldiers during their time at the assorted camps.

Series IV – Publications: This series contains a number of military manuals. The field manuals are arranged in order of their organizational number. The first number after the letters FM indicates the subject classification while the second number indicates the individual manuals. These manuals cover a broad number of subjects including weaponry, munitions, intelligence, and vehicles. The technical manuals follow a similar system where the first number indicates the specific branch that published the manual while the second designates the different manuals from that branch. These manuals are from the Engineering Corps. The dates of the manuals center on World War II but also include manuals from both before and after the war. The “other” folder contains a manual published in the mid to late 1930s before this classification system was created, as well as several manuals used in military schools. There is also a song book for soldiers.

Series V – Training Units: Includes information on the various divisions, battalions and units participating in the training program. Most of the material in this series focuses on the infantry divisions. It also includes material from cavalry and engineering units, as well as several hospital units.

Series VI – Video Recordings: This series contains five VHS video tapes. Three of these are histories of squadrons that went through desert training and the remaining two are about the Laguna Camp.

CONTAINER LIST:

Box	Folder	Title	Dates
1	1	Camps: Bouse	1954 – 2012, N.D.
	2	Camps: Hyder/Horn	1959 – 2010, N.D.
	3	Camps: Laguna	1943 – 2011, N.D.
	4	Camps: Pilot Knob, California	1990 – 2009, N.D.
	5	Camps: Young, California	N.D.
	6	Desert Training Center	1942 – 1985
	7	Desert Training Center	1985 – 2012, N.D.
	8	Desert Training Center: Final Report	1946
	9	Desert Training Center: Medical Corps.	1943 – 1944, N.D.
	10	Desert Training Center: Site Preservation	1986 – 2000
2	1	Photographs: Camps	1943, N.D.
	2	Photographs: Equipment	N.D.
	3	Photographs: People	1943, N.D.
	4	Publications: Field Manuals, FM 1-10 – FM 4-7	1940 – 1945
	5	Publications: Field Manuals, FM 5-20C – FM 5-35	1941 – 1944
	6	Publications: Field Manuals, FM 9-5 – FM 21-25	1941 – 1944
3	1	Publications: Field Manuals, FM 21-26 – FM 21-50	1942 – 1944
	2	Publications: Field Manuals, FM 23-5	1943 – 1951
	3	Publications: Field Manuals, FM 23-10 – FM 23-35	1940 – 1949
	4	Publications: Field Manuals, FM 23-35 – FM 23-60	1940 – 1946
4	1	Publications: Field Manuals, FM 23-90 – FM 27-10	1940 – 1944
	2	Publications: Field Manuals, FM 30-42 – FM 31-25	1941 – 1943
	3	Publications: Field Manuals, Other	1938 – 1939
	4	Publications: Other Manuals	1939 – 1943
	5	Publications: Song Book	1942
	6	Publications: Technical Manuals, TM 5-615 – TM 11-423	1944 – 1946
5	1	Training Units: Cavalry (36 th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron)	1988
	2	Training Units: Engineer Aviation (836 th Battalion)	1987, N.D.
	3	Training Units: Hospital Units (54 th Evacuation Hospital, Yuma Station Hospital)	N.D.
	4	Training Units: Infantry (8 th , 77 th , 81 st , 85 th , 104 th Divisions)	1946 – 2004, N.D.
	5	Training Units: Ordinance (199 th Battalion)	1944
	6	Videos: “36 th Cavalry Recon. –	N.D.

		Camp Pilot Knob, WWII”	
	7	Videos: “77 th Division, Arizona 1943”	N.D.
6	1	Videos: “80 th Division Video History August 1944 – July 1945”	N.D.
	2	Videos: “Camp Laguna WWII Desert Training Center”	N.D.
	3	Videos: “Desert Training Center, CP Laguna - KYMA”	N.D.