



FROM THE EMPIRE STATE TO THE PACIFIC THEATER:

27th Infantry Division Before Combat, 1940-1943

To Arms: New York National Guard Prepares for War, 1940

Before the United States entered World War II, and before New York's 27th Infantry Division (ID) had its first engagement with the Japanese Army in late 1943, the soldiers of the 27th ID spent three years conducting essential combat training and military maneuvers plus safeguarding the California and Hawaiian coastlines.

As wars raged across Europe and Asia in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the United States remained militarily uninvolved. Yet, despite its neutrality, in 1940 the US prepared for war. On September 25, 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8551 order National Guard units into federal service for one year beginning October 15, 1940.

Across New York State 24,500 soldiers of the 27th ID reported to their local armories before shipping out for basic training. It took nine days to transport the entire division 1,000 miles by road and railroad to Fort McClellan, Alabama where it trained from October 1940 to February 1941.

Fort McClellan quickly expanded to accommodate the increase in troops. Soldiers cleared wooded land to make way for new buildings and tents.

Private James Carter, 105th Infantry

Regiment recalled how "after a horrible four day journey to Alabama, we got to the fort, and we had these streets that had tree stumps in them and everything else, and we were ordered to dig them up and set up our tents. We thought we were going to be living in barracks."

During 13 weeks of basic training, the soldiers of the 27th ID conducted grueling long marches and daily calisthenics; performed bayonet, marksman and artillery drills; and learned basic hygiene and sanitation practices. Later they participated in maneuvers and mock wargames to sharpen battlefield discipline and skills.



Private Paul Franke, 102nd Engineers, 27th ID, during Army Maneuvers in Ogdensburg, New York, August 1940. The 27th ID participated in federal maneuvers with the First Army in St. Lawrence County where soldiers conducted basic training exercises and National Guard units were pitted against regular Army troops in mock battles near the Racquette River. New York State Military Museum



Before shipping out to basic training at Fort McClellan, Alabama, members of the 105th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Division, conducted drills in Yonkers, New York, 1940.

New York State Military Museum