



Airborne: A Combat History of American Airborne Forces

E.M. Flanagan Jr.

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The United States Army's experiment with airborne forces started at Fort Benning, Georgia, in early 1940 with a single platoon of paratroopers. From this tiny seed grew the mighty American airborne legion that spearheaded America's attack against Nazi Germany in Sicily and Normandy. Ultimately this branch included an airborne corps headquarters, five full airborne divisions, and several independent battalions and regiments.

On the nights of June 5 and 6, 1944, the parachutes and gliders of six regiments of American airborne infantry filled the dark sky over Normandy. Paratroopers and glidermen of the 101st Airborne Division Screaming Eagles were literally dropping into battle for the first time, harbingers of the vast Allied D-day armada. Moments later, they were joined by the veteran All Americans of the 82d Airborne Division, who had first jumped into combat almost a year earlier in Sicily.

For the American airborne troopers, the road to victory in Europe led through the ill-conceived Arnhem campaign and on to the Bulge, where the American paratroopers saved the day for the Allies. The 17th Airborne Division "bounced the Rhine" in the last airborne operation in Europe and fought across Germany until VE Day with their band of brothers.

In the Pacific, the Angels of the 11th Airborne Division saw hard combat in the Philippines. The independent 503d Regimental Combat Team fulfilled General MacArthur's promise to return when it daringly parachuted onto the small area known as Topside on the rocky fortress island of Corregidor.

Following World War II, the airborne fought with distinction in Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War. Along the way American paratroopers have also given yeoman service on smaller battlefields such as the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama. Written by a former paratrooper, *Airborne* is the definitive combat history of these elite forces.

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