

# History of the 116th Cavalry (MBCT)



## Post-OIF and a Renewed Combat Focus (2015-Present)

In 2015, the 116th refocused on large-scale combat operations, conducting the first armor and mechanized infantry platoon live-fire events on record in the post-9/11 Army National Guard. That summer, the 116th returned to the NTC to challenge "Blackhorse" again. The brigade's ability to prepare, move, execute 14 days of force-on-force, and regenerate combat power served as a model for subsequent Guard brigades.

In 2016 the 116<sup>th</sup> modernized again. 1-163 IN reduced one tank company, and 3-116 reduced one mech infantry company. 2-116 converted to a CAB with two armor and one mech company. 1-221<sup>st</sup> CAV from Las Vegas joined the 116<sup>th</sup> as the ARS. The BSTB converted to the 116<sup>th</sup> Brigade Engineer Battalion, retaining the signal and MI company while increasing to two engineer companies. 1-148 FAR increased again to three batteries, adding Battery C in Burley.

The 2019 NTC rotation was even more successful, with the Brigade's speed and proficiency catching Blackhorse off guard and upending the training scenario's templated script. The 116th finished the 2019 NTC rotation with many "firsts" and "mosts" along with numerous accolades from exercise observers; even Blackhorse begrudgingly complimented the skill of the 116th.

From 2021 to 2023, the 116th dispatched back-to-back reinforced armor battalion task forces to the US Central Command region for Spartan Shield (OSS). These rotations required a "whole of Brigade" approach, with Soldiers from every organization in the Brigade filling critical vacancies. While deployed, the task forces provided the Central Command armored response force, conducted anti-ISIS combat operations in Syria, and conducted exercises with

allied nations. Ten Soldiers were awarded the Purple Heart during OSS.

The 116th has conducted numerous international training exercises with forces from Canada, Thailand, Cambodia, and Romania. At home, its Soldiers have answered the call for domestic support many times, assisting with snow removal, wildfire support, flood control, COVID-19 response, and security missions in Washington D.C.

On March 31, 2026, the 116th underwent its most significant reorganization in 80 years, converting from an armored brigade to ainfantry brigade combat team (MBCT). The current organization is as follows: 116th Cavalry (MBCT) HQ: Boise; 1-116th CAV, HQ: Lewiston; 2-116th CAV, HQ: Caldwell; 1-221st CAV, HQ: Las Vegas, NV; 145th Light Support Battalion, HQ: Jerome; 1-148th Field Artillery, HQ: Pocatello; Company M, 116th Cavalry, Boise; 122nd Signal Company, Boise; and 216th Military Intelligence Company, Boise.

### 116th Cavalry Brigade Insignia

**Description:** On a scarlet disc with a 1/8 inch (.32cm) yellow border 2 1/2 inches (6.35cm) in diameter overall, a yellow sun emitting twelve rays surmounted by a blue horizontal wavy band bearing a yellow gliding snake.

**Symbolism:** The wavy band and the snake are taken from the coat of arms of the former organization, the 116th Armored Cavalry Regiment. The wavy band and snake represent the Snake River, and refer to the home area of the former organization, the Snake River Valley. The sun alludes to the state of Idaho, noted for the beauty of its sunrises. The name is taken from Shoshoni Indian words meaning " the sun comes down the mountain" or "it is morning." The predominant color, yellow, is representative of Armored Cavalry units.

**Background:** The shoulder sleeve insignia was originally approved for the 16th Armored Cavalry Regiment on 9 October 1967. It was redesignated for the 116th Cavalry Brigade, effective 1 September 1989, with the symbolism revised. (TIOH Drawing Number A-1-468).

Unit history written by CSM Paul Maisey

Sources:

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### Territorial Militia—Early Statehood (1877-1917)

The 116th Cavalry Brigade's roots trace to Idaho's territorial days. On June 19, 1877, Territorial Governor Mason Brayman issued General Order number 1, authorizing militia companies to protect settlers from the warring Nez Perce. Although no records of an organized militia exist from this time to statehood, the groundwork for Idaho's military tradition was laid.

The First Regiment of Idaho Infantry was organized between 1889-1890 with companies in Boise, Grangeville, Weiser, Albion, Eagle Rock (now Idaho Falls), Hailey, and Pocatello. Mobilized for the Spanish-American War, the unit was redesignated the Idaho Volunteers May 7, 1898. After service in the Philippines, the unit returned to its home stations on September 25, 1899.

As the First Idaho Volunteers mustered out in 1899, the Regiment of the Idaho National Guard organized with companies in Nampa, Preston, Rigby, St. Anthony, Rathdrum, Boise, Lewiston, Wardner (now Kellogg), Payette, and Idaho Falls. The Second Regiment was reorganized in June 1916 for the Mexican Border Expedition. The unit mobilized to Nogales, Arizona, returning to Boise on December 19, 1916, and was mustered out of Federal service on January 29, 1917.

### World War I—Creation of the 116th Cavalry (1917-1926)

On September 25, 1917, the Second Idaho Infantry moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, where it was broken up and reorganized as the 1st Field Artillery, the 1st Machine Gun Battalion, and the 116th Engineers. These units served during

World War I at Chateau Thierry, Angers, and Sells Sur Cher, France. After the war, these units mustered out, and the Idaho National Guard began to reorganize.

On March 4, 1920, the Cavalry Regiment organized in the Snake River Valley as part of the Army's expansion of cavalry in Western states, capitalizing on the population's rugged nature and equestrian abilities. On October 12, 1921, this unit was redesignated as the Cavalry Regiment the 24th Cavalry Division. The pre-World War II 116th was a horse cavalry unit composed of: Medical Detachment, Wilder; Headquarters Troop, Caldwell; Machine Gun Troop, Weiser; Troop A, Gooding; Troop B, Pocatello; Troop E, Boise; Troop F, Boise; Troop I, Lewiston; and Troop K, Moscow. The lettered troops maintained a strength of 63 enlisted men and three officers—each with their own horse—organized into two platoons and a machine rifle squad. Troopers carried the M1903 Springfield rifle, .45 caliber pistols, and the .30 caliber water-cooled machine gun.

During this period, the Engineer through several changes, including a period as the 3rd Battalion, 186th Infantry, before receiving back its World War I designation on October 17, 1928. On March 15, 1926, the Field Artillery Regiment organized in Coeur D'Alene.

### **World War II—Early Cold War (1940-1949)**

In July 1940, the 116th Cavalry Regiment participated in 4th Army maneuvers near Fort Lewis, Washington. There, officers were informed that the Regiment was to be “unhorsed” and converted to Medium Field Artillery. On September 16, 1940, the 116th Cavalry Regiment, the 116th Engineers, and the 148th Field Artillery Regiment were mobilized. The 116th Cavalry was redesignated as the 3rd Field Artillery Regiment. The 183rd's official history notes the chaos of this time: “new equipment trickling in, schools for officers and non-coms [NCOs], a thousand things to learn,” adding that artillery gunnery “was a case of the blind leading the blind, in the beginning.”

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the 183rd Field Artillery Regiment established defensive positions in the Puget Sound region. On February 8, 1943, the regiment was reorganized again: the first battalion became the 3rd Field Artillery Battalion, and the second became the 1st Field Artillery Battalion. The two Battalions departed for England on December 5, 1943. The 951st landed on Utah Beach on June 10, 1944, while the 183rd landed on June 15. Both the 183rd and 951st participated in campaigns across the European Theater and established enviable reputations. The 183rd earned 17 Silver Stars, 74 Bronze Stars, and 96 Purple Hearts. The 951st earned 68 Bronze Stars and 37 Purple Hearts, with nine killed in action. During the war the 183rd fired 90,392 rounds of 155mm artillery while the 951st fired 85,537 rounds. The 951st was inactivated on October 13, 1945, and the 183rd followed on October 30, 1945.

In January 1947, the units were reorganized within the Idaho National Guard: the 183rd became the 183rd Infantry Regiment, and the 951st became the 3rd Mechanized Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. On September 12, 1949, the Adjutant General published General Order No. 7, merging these two units as well as the 200th Tank battalion to form the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, dispersed throughout Idaho's Snake River Valley.

### **Cold War—Post 9/11 (1949-2003)**

For 40 years, from 1949-1989, the 116th Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) remained a strategic reserve of the US Army. The lettered companies of the 116th ACR were each organized with a mortar squad, scout section, tank section, mess section, rifle squad, and a maintenance section. Each of the three battalions consisted of a headquarters company, a howitzer company, a tank company, and three lettered companies: 1st Bn 116 CAV, HQ: Caldwell, Companies A, B, C; 2nd Bn 116 CAV, HQ: Pocatello, Companies D, E, F; 3rd Bn 116 CAV, HQ: Twin Falls, Companies G, H, I. For a period in the 1970s there existed Troop N, the Regimental aviation troop. The 116th ACR conducted training at Gowen Field, Orchard, Tyhee Flats, Mountain Home Air Base, Camp Williams, UT, and Yakima, WA. Common equipment from this era included the M1 Garand, the M3A1 submachine gun, M7 Priest self-propelled howitzer (105mm), M4A3 Sherman light tank, M41 Walker Bulldog light tank, Jeeps, caliber .30 machine guns, and 4.2" mortars. During this time the 148 Field Artillery Battalion and the 116th Engineers were unaffiliated with the 116th ACR, headquartered at Lewiston and Idaho Falls respectively. In 1967 3-116th CAV REG was allotted to the Nevada Army National Guard, in 1974 it was reallocated to the Oregon Army National Guard.

Throughout the Cold War era the US Army implemented the Combined Arms Regimental System, which phased out the regiment as a tactical organization in favor of the brigade, while retaining regimental designation for lineage, history, and ceremonial functions. On September 1, 1989, the 116th ACR converted to the Cavalry Brigade, at which time the '116th Regiment' ceased to exist as a tactical organization. The new 116th Cavalry Brigade consisted of units in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah, and North Dakota. The 116th Cavalry Brigade organization was: Brigade HQ Company: Boise; 1-163rd IN as a mechanized infantry battalion (MT); 2-116th CAV as an armor battalion, HQ: Twin Falls; 3-116th CAV as an armor battalion (OR); 116th Engineer Battalion, HQ: Lewiston; 1-148th Field Artillery (with one battery in Utah), HQ: Pocatello; the 145th Support Battalion, HQ: Caldwell; and an air defense artillery battery (ND). The 116th Cavalry was one of 15 enhanced separate Brigades in the Army, administratively assigned to round out the 4th Infantry Division.

In July 1998, the 116th Cavalry Brigade deployed to the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, CA. As only the second Guard Brigade to do so since Desert Storm, the 116th shattered preconceived ideas about Guard units, winning two of four battles against the formidable "Opposing Force." From March to October 2002, 300 Soldiers from the 116th deployed to Bosnia for Operation Joint Forge (SFOR XI), conducting stabilization missions under the 25th Infantry Division.

### **Operation Iraqi Freedom III & Operation New Dawn (2004-2011)**

In June 2004, the 116th Cavalry Brigade mobilized as an entire brigade for the first time in its history for Iraqi Freedom III. Nearly 5,000 citizen-Soldiers from Idaho, Oregon, and Montana left their families for an 18-month mobilization. The 116th mobilized with a full complement of modern firepower including M1 Abrams tanks, M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles, M109 self-propelled howitzers, and armored Humvees. After training at Fort Bliss, TX and Fort Polk, LA the 116th arrived in Iraq in late 2004, bolstering security in central Iraq for the country's first democratic elections.

The 116th then relieved elements of the 25th Infantry Division in Kirkuk, assuming responsibility for defeating insurgents and securing the city of 800,000, as well as the entirety of the Kirkuk and Al-Sulaymaniyah Provinces. In 2005 the 116th suffered 11 Soldiers killed in action and had 87 Soldiers awarded the Purple Heart. After 10 months in Iraq, the 116th was relieved by the 101st Airborne Division.

On October 1, 2006 the 116th underwent a modernization: 1-163 IN and 3-116 CAV converted to Combined Arms Battalions (CAB), each with two armor and two mech infantry companies. 2-116 CAV converted to an armored reconnaissance squadron (ARS). The 116th Engineers inactivated and the 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion (BSTB) was created, consisting of an engineer company, a signal company, and a military intelligence company. 1-148 FAR reduced to two firing batteries.

In September 2010, the 116th mobilized again for New Dawn Iraq. Approximately 2,700 Soldiers from Idaho, Montana, and Oregon assumed responsibility for garrison command, force protection, convoy security, and diplomatic security missions at the Victory Base Complex in Baghdad, playing a major role in the turnover of the country to the Iraqi Government. In 2011, two Soldiers from the 116th were killed in action and eight were awarded the Purple Heart.