

# From Leyte to the Levant

## A Brief History of the 389th MI Battalion (A)

by Christopher E. Howard

**ABSTRACT:** On 16 July 2019, the 389th Military Intelligence Battalion (Airborne) was activated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. First organized during World War II, the 389th fuses the tactical intelligence efforts of Special Forces, Psychological Operations, and Civil Affairs units, with their higher operational-level commands. This article provides the lineage, operational history, and mission of the newest battalion in the U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

The 389th Military Intelligence (MI) Battalion dates to World War II, with the constitution of the 389th Translator Team on 14 December 1944. Organized per Table of Organization and Equipment (T/O&E) 30-600T (September 1944), “Intelligence Services,” the translator team was authorized one officer and three enlisted men.<sup>1</sup> Activated on 27 February 1945 in the Philippines, it consisted of specially trained Japanese American linguists from the Military Intelligence Service (MIS).<sup>2</sup>

As part of the 314th Headquarters Intelligence Detachment, the 389th Translator Team was attached

to the G-2, 96th Infantry Division (ID).<sup>3</sup> It saw combat during the Leyte Campaign.<sup>4</sup> Afterwards, it was shipped to Okinawa on 26 March 1945 aboard the USS *Mendocino* (APA-100), as part of the Southern Attack Force. It landed on 1 April at Beach White 1, in the lightly defended Hagushi Beaches area of Okinawa.<sup>5</sup>

During the ensuing three-month battle, one translator was attached to each of the 96th ID infantry regiments.<sup>6</sup> With the battle drawing to a close in late June, the 96th ID concentrated its linguists at their civilian and Prisoner of War collection point to assist with the screening of civilians and interrogating of Japanese prisoners.<sup>7</sup> The 389th Translator Team received the Presidential Unit Citation (PUC), awarded in December 2001, for actions on Okinawa.<sup>8</sup>

Following a series of minor postwar reorganizations, the unit was inactivated in July 1952.<sup>9</sup> Its next chapter began on 7 January 1963, with the activation of the 389th MI Detachment in Louisville, Kentucky.



The USS *Mendocino* (APA-100), flagship of Transport Squadron 14, Southern Attack Force, was a 492 foot long, *Bayfield* Class ‘attack transport’ (APA), armed with two 5-inch dual-purpose guns, four 40 millimeter antiaircraft (AA) guns, and eighteen 20 millimeter AA guns.



A U.S. Army Reserve unit, it was attached to the 11th Special Forces Group (SFG), beginning its long association with Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF).<sup>10</sup> The detachment's 8 officers, 7 warrant officers, and 30 enlisted personnel were organized into collection, counterintelligence, imagery interpretation, interrogation, and order of battle sections, and were authorized to wear the Green Beret.<sup>11</sup> But, during its first decade, it lacked a clear mission. It also did not have the necessary support structure, due to its attached relationship with the 11th SFG.<sup>12</sup>

During the early 1970s, the 389th MI Detachment gained an influx of combat-tested, Ranger and Special Forces (SF)-qualified officers, who led the unit into the 1980s.<sup>13</sup> Unit readiness and morale improved, but it still lacked resources.<sup>14</sup> In addition, training with the 11th SFG was limited to two weeks of annual training in the summer.<sup>15</sup> This began to change in 1985, when the unit was reorganized and redesignated as the 389th MI Company (Combat Electronic Warfare Intelligence [CEWI]) (Special Forces Group).<sup>16</sup> The conversion to a CEWI Company added signals intelligence (SIGINT) positions, increasing its authorized strength to 10 officers, 11 warrant officers, and 76 enlisted personnel.<sup>17</sup>

After years of being attached, the 389th MI Company was formally assigned to 11th SFG in 1986.<sup>18</sup> This change brought it under U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), which led to increased funding, more training opportunities, and full-time manning.<sup>19</sup> It supported 11th SFG's Europe-focused mission (Operation Plan [OPLAN] 4304) and participated in Operation FLINTLOCK, based out of Royal Air Force Station Watton, England.<sup>20</sup> The company was inactivated in September 1990, becoming the 'organic' MI Company for 11th SFG, until the group's inactivation in 1994, as part of the post-Operation DESERT STORM draw-down.<sup>21</sup>

The 389th Military Intelligence Company (Combat Electronic Warfare Intelligence) (Airborne) poses for a group photo near the Brandenburg Road Gate, Fort Knox, Kentucky, in June 1987.

## MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

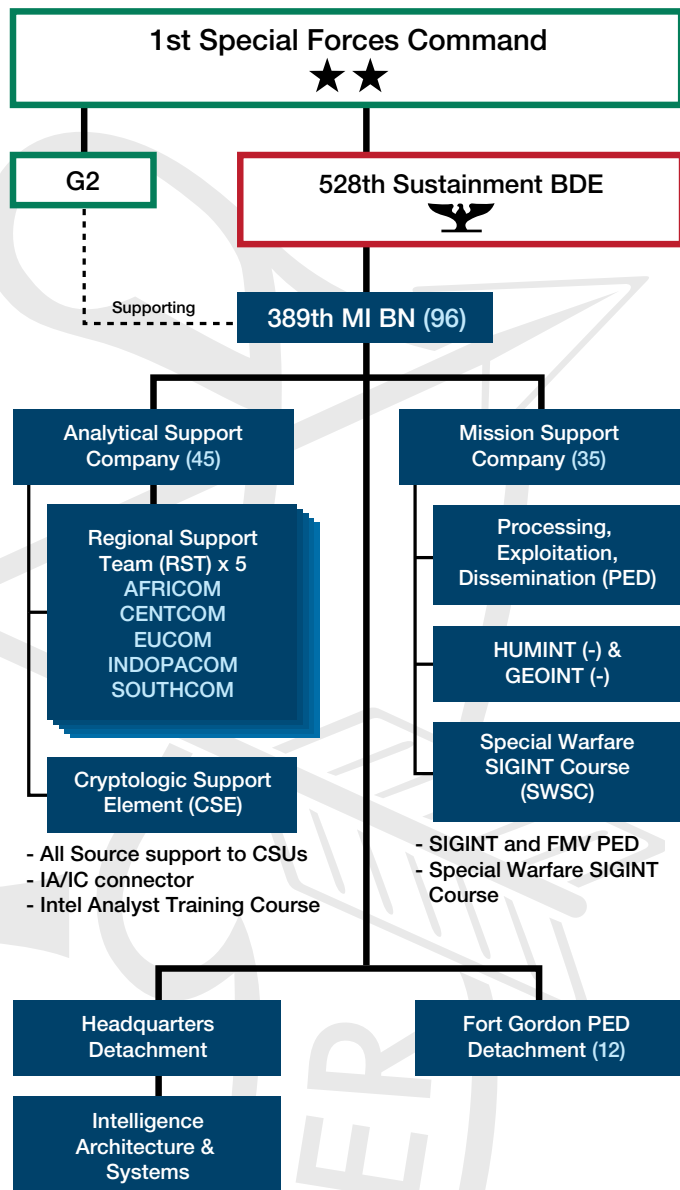
**During World War II, over 6,000 Americans of Japanese Ancestry (AJAs) served in the U.S. Army's Military Intelligence Service (MIS). Most received Japanese language training at the MIS Language School (MISLS) at Camp Savage, Minnesota, and later at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. From there, they deployed in small teams as interpreters, translators, and interrogators throughout the Pacific Theater.<sup>1</sup> Beginning with Guadalcanal in 1942, they fought in every major battle in the war against Japan.<sup>2</sup> In June 2001, the MIS received the Presidential Unit Citation "for outstanding and gallant performance of duty in action against enemies of the United States from 1 May 1942 to 2 September 1945."<sup>3</sup> Then, in October 2010, MIS veterans were among the 19,000 AJAs awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, along with veterans of the 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team, "in recognition of their dedicated service during World War II."<sup>4</sup>**



The Congressional Gold Medal presented to the "Nisei Soldiers of World War II" in 2010 is inscribed with "Go for Broke," the motto of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.







Soldiers from the Analytical Support Company, 389th Military Intelligence Battalion, hone their marksmanship during their 'TITAN FURY' Field Exercise.

Two decades after the 389th's inactivation, a small number of intelligence personnel in the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, 1st Special Forces Command (1st SFC), began working to establish a new ARSOF MI Battalion to provide 1st SFC with a deployable, operational-level intelligence capability.<sup>22</sup> Then, in March 2015, Colonel (COL) Daniel K. Rickleff, Commander, 528th Sustainment Brigade, officially requested the establishment of a provisional MI Battalion.<sup>23</sup> On 2 June 2015, Lieutenant General (LTG) Charles T. Cleveland, Commanding General, U.S. Army Special Operations Command (Airborne) approved the request, assigning the new battalion to the 528th Sustainment Brigade.<sup>24</sup> While in provisional status, they participated in Operation INHERENT RESOLVE, the counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) effort and supported other sensitive ARSOF missions.

From 2015 to mid-2019, the unit operated under the *ad hoc* name of 1st Special Forces Command Military Intelligence Battalion. But, it needed a permanent unit designation, once activated.<sup>25</sup> To avoid being assigned the 'next available' number, Department of the Army Force Management, U.S. Army Center of Military History, and USASOC History Office personnel worked with battalion leadership to determine a unit designation that reflected a legacy of military intelligence support to ARSOF and carried forth the wartime honors of a past military intelligence unit. The 389th met both criteria.<sup>26</sup>

On 16 July 2019, the 389th Military Intelligence Battalion (Airborne) was activated, with an authorized strength of 5 officers, 5 warrant officers, and 86

## 389th MI Battalion LINES OF EFFORT

1. Provide intelligence support to the component subordinate units
2. Serve as the core of the J2 for Special Operations Joint Task Force contingency
3. Execute geospatial intelligence (GEOINT) and processing, exploitation, and dissemination (PED) for ARSOF platforms
4. Conduct intelligence training and support standardization of intelligence support to ARSOF



Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Sapriya Childs takes the battalion colors from Colonel (COL) John B. Hinson, 528th Sustainment Brigade Commander, during the battalion's 28 August 2018 Change of Command ceremony. LTC Richard A. Malaga (left) relinquishes command, after leading the battalion since September 2015 and guiding it through its formative period. Command Sergeant Major (CSM) James A. Cook (right) served as the battalion's senior enlisted advisor for both commanders.

enlisted personnel and three companies: an Analytical Support Company, a Mission Support Company, and a Headquarters and Headquarters Company.<sup>27</sup> Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Sapriya Childs, the 389th MI Battalion “conducts command and control of multi-disciplined intelligence operations in support of the 1st SFC, component subordinates units (CSUs), and mission partners. On order, it deploys and conducts...intelligence operations as part of a Special Operations Joint Task Force (SOJTF).”<sup>28</sup> The motto of the 389th MI Battalion is “Illuminate to Action!” 🇺🇸

## Endnotes

1 War Department, “Table of Organization and Equipment (T/O&E) No. 30-600T: Intelligence Service Organization,” 26 September 1944 (Washington, DC). An intelligence detachment was authorized a three-man headquarters, led by a Captain (O-3) and three, four-man functional teams (translator, interrogator, and interpreter), for a total of fifteen personnel. The team-level officer was to be a First or Second Lieutenant, and the enlisted positions were two Technicians, Grade 3 (T/3) and one Technician, Grade 4 (T/4). In practice, language detachments, also known as “Intelligence Service Organization (ISO) teams,” had one officer and ten enlisted men, and were not organized into functional teams.

- 2 U.S. Army Center of Military History, “Statement of Service: 389th Military Intelligence Company,” March 2018, Washington, D.C. hereafter 389th MI Company Statement of Service. For more information on the MIS, see: James McNaughton, *Nisei Linguists: Japanese Americans in the Military Intelligence Service During World War II* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006); Military Intelligence Services Veterans Club of Hawaii, *Secret Valor: M.I.S. Personnel, World War II, Pacific Theater* (Hawaii: Military Intelligence Service Veterans of Hawaii, 1993); Joseph D. Harrington, *Yankee Samurai: The Secret Role of Nisei in America's Pacific Victory* (Detroit, MI: Pettigrew Enterprises, Inc., 1979); or visit the [Go For Broke National Education Center website at: http://www.goforbroke.org/learn/history/military\\_units/mis.php](http://www.goforbroke.org/learn/history/military_units/mis.php).
- 3 Headquarters, XXIV Corps, “SUBJECT: Action Report – 96th Infantry Division,” 28 July 1945, Center of Military History, Washington, DC, hereafter 96th Infantry Division AAR, 28 July 1945. The 96th Infantry Division language detachment, the 314th Headquarters (HQ) Intelligence Detachment, was constituted and activated concurrently with the 389th Translator Team, 344th Interrogation Team and 372nd Interpreter Team in the Philippines. Per T/O&E 30-600T (September 1944), the teams were organic to the detachment, so it is unclear why they were numbered separately. With assistance from Japanese-American and MIS veterans organizations, the author has identified a total of twelve veterans, ten enlisted and two officers, who served with the 314th HQ Intelligence Detachment during WWII, but has found no record of any veteran who served with the 389th, 344th or 372nd. Oral histories from 314th veterans indicate that they did not use, and possibly were not even aware of, the separate team designations. This renders the 389th Translator Team all but indistinguishable from the 314th HQ Intelligence Detachment. Email from Mark Matsunaga to Christopher E. Howard, “SUBJECT: Herbert Yanamura,” 18 September 2018, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Herbert K. Yanamura, interview with Ted Tsukiyama and James Tanabe, 2 November 2009, on internet at <http://www.ndajams.omeka.net/items/show/1056042>, hereafter Yanamura interview; 2 November 2009.
- 4 389th MI Company Statement of Service. The 389th Translator Team received campaign participation credit for Leyte, despite being activated late in the campaign (27 February 1945). MIS soldiers of what became the 314th HQ Intelligence Detachment were sent to the 96th ID in September 1944 and participated in the initial Leyte assault on 20 October 1944, landing in the vicinity of Dulag. Takejiro Higa and Herbert K. Yanamura were two of these soldiers. Their oral histories are available online. Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, 167; Takejiro Higa, interview with Karen Nakamatsu, 25 September 1999, on internet at <http://ndajams.omeka.net/items/show/1053115>, hereafter Higa interview, 25 September 1999; Yanamura interview, 2 November 2009.
- 5 Yanamura interview, 2 November 2009; Attachment to email from Kathleen M. Fargey to Christopher E. Howard, “SUBJECT: RE: Lineage for New MI Battalion,” 6 August 2018, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Naval History and Heritage Command, “Mendocino,” 7 August 2015, on internet at <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/m/mendocino.html>. An attack transport (APA), the USS *Mendocino* was numbered APA-100.
- 6 Headquarters, Army Ground Forces, Army War College, “SUBJECT: Observer's Report – Okinawa Operation,” 1 May 1945, on internet at <https://archive.org/details/a438976-nsia?q=observer%27s+report+okinawa+operation>; 96th Infantry Division AAR, 28 July 1945. The three regiments were the 381st, 382nd, and 383rd Infantry Regiments. The translators were recalled to the Division HQ in mid-May 1945 to deal with a heavy influx of captured documents, then returned to the regiments in early June. T/3 Herbert K. Yanamura started the battle at the 96th Infantry Division HQ, translating captured enemy documents, but later received permission to swap out with one of his fellow MIS linguists, working with the 381st Infantry, to get closer to the action. On 21 June 1945, using a loudspeaker, Yanamura called for the citizens of Maehara to evacuate the village, prior to an American bombardment. Over the course of his three-hour appeal, hundreds of Okinawan civilians (perhaps as many as 1,500) responded to his call. Another 314th HQ Intelligence Detachment soldier, Thomas Masui, was credited with encouraging nearly 2,000 Okinawan civilians to come out of caves and burial chambers. Yanamura interview, 2 November 2009; Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, 227.
- 7 96th Infantry Division AAR, 28 July 1945.
- 8 Headquarters, Department of the Army, “General Orders No. 29: Individual and Unit Awards” 31 December 2001, Washington, DC.



- 9 389th MI Company Statement of Service. Between the end of World War II and its 20 July 1952 inactivation, the 389th Translator Team was inactivated 25 March 1947 in Korea; allotted to the Organized Reserves Corps on 13 May 1948; activated 21 May 1948 at Fort Worth, Texas and inactivated there on 9 January 1950; redesignated 6 September 1950 as the 389th Translator Detachment; activated 2 October 1950 at Cincinnati, Ohio; and relocated to Fort Thomas, Kentucky on 5 February 1951.
- 10 11th Special Forces Group (SFG) was a U.S. Army Reserve SFG with a European focus.
- 11 Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-20: *Internal Defense and Development* (Washington, DC: 1974) 8-8; Attachment to email from Major General (MG) (Retired) Dean Allen Youngman to Christopher E. Howard, "SUBJECT: RE: 389th Update," 21 September 2018, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Youngman email, 21 September 2018. Only Special Forces-qualified personnel wore the 'full' 11th SFG flash on their beret; other Airborne-qualified personnel wore the 'candy stripe' flash, and non-Airborne personnel wore baseball caps.
- 12 MG (Ret.) Dean Allen Youngman, interview with Christopher E. Howard, 26 September 2018, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Youngman interview, 26 September 2018: The 389th MI Detachment was designated as a "Special Action Force (SAF)," renamed "Security Assistance Force" in 1975, but it was never employed in this capacity. The SAF designation, according to MG (Ret.) Youngman, reflected a "plug and play" arrangement, through which the 389th MI Detachment could be 'plugged' into a SAF, if needed.
- 13 Youngman email, 21 September 2018: "During the time it existed, the 389th (for most of its existence, a 45-person detachment) produced a number of members who went on to notable careers. Three of its officers retired as Major Generals: John R. Groves, Michael W. Davidson, and D. Allen Youngman, each having later served as the Adjutant General of the Kentucky National Guard. Another early unit commander, Donald J. Thomas, retired as USAR Colonel (COL) and was then promoted to Brigadier General in the Indiana National Guard Reserve. Several officers reached COL during their careers, including COL (Ret.) Henry 'Skip' Watson III, who [later] commanded 2nd Battalion, 11th SFG, and retired as a COL assigned to Assistant Secretary of Defense/Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD/SOLIC). The unit's original Active Guard Reserve (AGR) warrant officer, Chief Warrant Officer Five (CW5) (Ret.) Paul E. Beane, retired as the Kentucky National Guard Command Chief Warrant Officer."
- 14 Youngman email, 21 September 2018: "Without concrete training guidance or resources to implement it, the unit focused on the things we could accomplish. Airborne operations were frequent, as was weapons qualification." MG (Ret.) Youngman noted, "Unique among U.S. Army Reserve units, we strongly emphasized physical training." MG (Ret.) Michael W. Davidson, interview with Christopher E. Howard, 26 June 2019, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Davidson interview, 26 June 2019: "It was my harebrained idea to run our unit in formation in the mini-marathon, held in Louisville every year in conjunction with the Kentucky Derby. I wasn't sure exactly what the reaction would be [but] it was like we had liberated Paris. People were cheering. They loved it. It helped us get past Vietnam with the citizens here." Reflecting on the strenuous physical training, ruck marches, field exercises, and airborne operations, MG (Ret.) Davidson said, "You could make good soldiers out of young men who were motivated and could accept the hard training challenge. We were able to do that in the 389th."
- 15 Youngman interview, 26 September 2018: Due to a lack of full-time personnel to make travel arrangements or obtain convoy clearance from the U.S. Army Military Traffic Management Command, getting to the annual training site, usually Fort Devens, Massachusetts, took some creativity on the part of unit-level leaders. Upon arrival, MG (Ret.) Youngman recalled, "the first order of business was usually to introduce ourselves [to 11th SFG] and attempt to answer the question, 'Why are you guys here?'"
- 16 Headquarters, Fifth U.S. Army, "Permanent Order 77-15," 8 August 1984. The effective date was 16 March 1985.
- 17 CW5 (Ret.) Paul E. Beane, interview with Christopher E. Howard, 28 June 2019, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. Organized as a scaled-down version of an Army CEWI battalion, the 389th MI Company gained signals intelligence (SIGINT) capabilities from Army Security Agency (ASA). That was integrated with the MI Detachments in accordance with CEWI doctrine.
- 18 Youngman email, 21 September 2018.
- 19 As a USSOCOM unit, the 389th MI Company received Major Force Program (MFP)-11 funding. MFP-11 is a dedicated line of funding for special operations forces.
- 20 COL (Ret.) Henry Watson III, interview with Christopher E. Howard, 28 June 2019, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. FLINTLOCK was the special operations 'piece' of the annual REFORGER (Return of Forces to Germany) exercise.
- 21 Youngman interview, 26 September 2018.
- 22 1st Special Forces Command Military Intelligence Battalion (Airborne) (Provisional) Annual Command History, 2015, copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 23 COL Daniel K. Rickleff, Memorandum for Commander, 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) (Provisional), "SUBJECT: Request to Establish Provisional Unit," 17 March 2015, copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. MG Darsie R. Rogers, Commanding General (CG), 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) (Provisional), forwarded COL Rickleff's request to LTG Charles T. Cleveland, CG, USASOC, in a memorandum dated 23 April 2015.
- 24 LTG Charles T. Cleveland, Memorandum for U.S. Army Special Forces Command (Airborne), "SUBJECT: Request to Establish Provisional Unit – Military Intelligence Battalion (Special Operations) (Provisional) (Airborne)," 2 June 2015, copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 25 Remaining the 1st SFC MI Battalion was not an option, because Table of Organization and Equipment Army units are designated by number, function, and echelon (ex: 112th Signal Battalion, 528th Sustainment Brigade).
- 26 Email from Kathleen M. Fargey to Christopher E. Howard, "SUBJECT: RE: Lineage for New MI Battalion, 17 July 2018, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. The email states that the Center of Military History, acting on a formal request from Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) Force Management, assigned the new MI battalion the designation and lineage of the 389th Military Intelligence Battalion on 12 June 2018.
- 27 Headquarters, USASOC, "Permanent Order 169-02," 18 June 2019, copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. The 389th MI Battalion Analytical Support Company (ASC) provides intelligence support to the 1st Special Forces Command and its component subordinate units (CSUs) through its five deployable Regional Support Teams (RSTs), each regionally aligned with a Geographic Combatant Command (GCC). The Mission Support Company (MSC) provides 1st Special Forces Command with Processing, Exploitation, and Dissemination (PED); Human Intelligence (HUMINT); and Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT) capabilities. The MSC also runs a Special Warfare Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) Course (SWSC), supporting the battalion line of effort, "conduct intelligence training and support standardization of intelligence support to ARSOF."
- 28 Email from LTC Sapriya Childs to Christopher E. Howard, "SUBJECT: Mission Statement," 1 July 2019, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Childs email, 1 July 2019.

## Military Intelligence Services Endnotes:

- 1 MIS soldiers recruited from the 100th Infantry Battalion or 442nd Regimental Combat Team had completed basic training prior to attending language school, but those recruited 'off the street' were sent to basic training upon graduation from the MISLS.
- 2 Mark Matsunaga, "Japanese American Units of World War II," 10 August 2016, on internet at <https://www.nps.gov/valr/learn/historyculture/upload/Summary-of-World-War-II-AJA-Units.pdf>.
- 3 Headquarters, Department of the Army, "General Orders No. 25: Individual and Unit Awards," 8 June 2001, on internet at [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_a/pdf/web/go0125.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/go0125.pdf).
- 4 Public Law 111-254, "An Act to grant the congressional gold medal, collectively, to the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, United States Army, in recognition of their dedicated service during World War II," 5 October 2010, on internet at <https://www.congress.gov/111/plaws/publ254/PLAW-111publ254.pdf>; Smithsonian Institution, "The Congressional Gold Medal," 15 July 2019, <http://cgm.smithsonianapa.org/honors/congressional-gold-medal.html>.